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*Andrews University*

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**ABSTRACT**

**TOWARD A CARING MINISTRY: AN INVESTIGATION INTO  
THE NEEDS AND CONCERNS OF DIVORCED AND SEPARATED  
PERSONS IN WEST INDIAN CHURCHES OF THE GREATER  
NEW YORK CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS**

by

**Alanzo H. Smith**

**Chair: Steven P. Vitrano**

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Report

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: TOWARD A CARING MINISTRY: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE NEEDS AND CONCERNS OF DIVORCED OR SEPARATED PERSONS IN WEST INDIAN CHURCHES OF THE GREATER NEW YORK CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Name of researcher: Alanzo H. Smith

Name and degree of faculty advisor: Steven P. Vitrano, Ph.D.

Date completed: August, 1988

The migratory patterns of West Indians to the United States of America and the problems related to adjustment to a more technological and industrial environment has had a negative impact on West Indian families. Consequently, many families become divorced or separated. The Seventh-day Adventist Church membership includes many of these divorced and separated West Indians.

Most of the West Indians have settled in the New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut tri-state area. The literature is replete with reports of the sociological problems of immigrants as well as the problems associated with divorce and separation. However, no known



study has been  
and separated

A purpose  
in West Indian  
needs and concerns  
selected from community  
their names. A sample  
City to assess the  
divorced and separated

Prior to the  
19:1-9 was done to include  
interviews and surveys  
consequently, three churches  
churches surveyed. The  
following: (1) While  
the ideal of God for many  
individual people and their  
themselves. (2) The diverse  
feelings of rejection and  
church could meet: understand  
(3) The West Indian churches  
they could have been of the  
separated West Indians; many  
members felt that their church  
separation issue clearly.



Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A Project Report  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
Alanzo H. Smith  
August 1988

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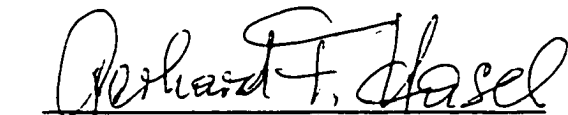
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7/26/88  
Date approved

#### DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my father and mother Egbert and Ivy Smith (Dad passed away August 1979) who believed in me from the very beginning and gave me their love.

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My greatest and most loving appreciation and thanks go to my darling wife "June" who provided me with love, joy, and happiness—the factors motivating my success.

Best of all, to my Heavenly Father for His special unconditional love.

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Project

This project investigates (1) the West Indian Seventh-day Adventist Christians' concept of divorce and their attitude toward divorced and separated persons, and (2) the needs and concerns of divorced and separated West Indian Seventh-day Adventists with a view to the development of a caring ministry by clergy and laity in West Indian churches of the Greater New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

### Justification of the Project

According to a study done by Ron Flowers, Home and Family Services Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the divorce rate in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is approximately the same as that of the general population. The United States Bureau of the Census on population statistics (1984) shows that out of 2,487,000 marriages, 1,155,000 end in divorce (a rate of 4.9 or one in every two marriages).

Despite this alarming statistic, I have discovered in my ministry and in conversations with many of my colleagues that ministers, lay leaders, and church members in West Indian churches of the Greater New York Conference have little if any training in caring for members experiencing divorce and separation. I have also



discovered that many are not aware of the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of the divorced or separated.

There are other concerns as well. For example,

1. Immigrants from the West Indies, oftentimes, are away from family and close friends; hence they find it difficult to find a support system during this period of crisis.
2. The change of pace for West Indians migrating to New York City, as well as the vast cultural and social differences they encounter, often has a negative effect on the family structure.
3. West Indians are a very strong but private people who believe in handling their own problems. Pain is endured with much masking. The family finds it difficult to admit that there is a problem it cannot handle, thus divorced and separated persons have a tendency to avoid help or counsel. A project of this nature should help to identify the needs and concerns of the divorced/separated.

This project, therefore, is undertaken with a genuine concern for the pain, isolation, frustration, and feelings of alienation that come with divorce or separation, primarily because of my past experience and my own inability to minister effectively to this group.

#### Description of the Project

This research is divided into two parts; part one contains chapters two to five and discusses the parallel synoptic passages on divorce with special emphasis on the exceptive clause in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. This is an effort to provide a theological foundation for the project.

Part two contains chapters six to twelve and investigates the needs and concerns of divorced and separated Seventh-day Adventist West Indian persons as well as the concepts and attitudes of church members. The approach assumed in part two is as follows:

1. A sociological study of West Indian families living in New York City to determine any social changes or factors affecting West Indian immigrants is reported in Chapter 6.
2. An in-depth study of the reasons for divorce and separation to determine the most frequent causes of divorce and separation among West Indians is reported in Chapter 7.
3. A selected sample of 61 divorced and separated persons in West Indian churches of Greater New York was interviewed to determine their spiritual, emotional, physical, and psychological needs and concerns. This effort was to ascertain from those concerned whether or not they feel that their needs in these areas are being met by their pastors and/or church members.

These subjects were selected (1) by recommendations from ministers, (2) through a snowballing effect (i.e., referrals from subjects themselves), and (3) from divorced and separated persons known to the interviewer. All were West Indians and members of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Through a one-hour session between the interviewer and each subject the questions for divorced and separated persons in Appendix I were discussed. These interviews were held in the homes of the subjects; their responses are discussed in Chapters 8 and 9.

To ensure consistency, the questions were asked one after the other as outlined in the questionnaire. On some questions, the

interviewer asked for clarification by asking the subject to explain the response further.

The subjects were purposively selected from seven different West Indian churches in the Greater New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>1</sup> Five of the seven churches are located in two boroughs of New York City (the Bronx and Brooklyn) and the others are located on Long Island, New York (Chapters 8 and 9).

4. A pre-seminar survey aimed at assessing the awareness of the spiritual, emotional, physical, and psychological needs and concerns of and attitudes toward divorced or separated people, was administered to three West Indian congregations. At two of the churches, the survey was conducted during the 11 o'clock Sabbath service; at the other church, it was given in the afternoon at the beginning of the divorce awareness seminar (Chapter 10).

5. Based upon the findings of the survey and interviews, a "Divorce/Separation Awareness Seminar" consisting of three sermons preached during the 11 o'clock service and three two-hour afternoon discussion periods was conducted for my own West Indian congregation over three consecutive weeks (Chapter 11).

6. A post-seminar survey was then given to this West Indian congregation to assess what changes may have occurred in their awareness of the spiritual, emotional, physical, and psychological needs and concerns of and attitudes toward divorced or separated persons (Chapter 12).

---

<sup>1</sup>See figure 5, appendix I.

The findings, along with the "Divorce/Separation Awareness Seminar," were shared with recommendations to the concerned pastors of West Indian churches in New York City.

### Definition of Terms

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: The world headquarters for the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, located in Washington, D.C.

Greater New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Regional offices of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination responsible for territorial administration in New York City.

Seventh-day Adventist: Official name of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

West Indian: Citizen of the West Indian Caribbean Islands.

Pre-Assessment Survey: Questionnaire administered to participants prior to Divorce/Separation Awareness Seminar.

Post-Assessment Survey: Questionnaire administered to participants after the Divorce/Separation Awareness Seminar.

Subjects: The 61 divorced and separated people who participated in interviews designed to elicit feelings and attitudes about their experience.

Respondents: The 343 men and women who participated in the survey in all three churches.

Porneia: The biblical term for fornication.

Morcheia: The biblical term for adultery.

Expectations from the Project

1. It was believed that this study would be helpful to me and my congregation in better understanding the concerns and frustrations of the divorced and separated. With this understanding, I hoped to develop a caring ministry targeted to their special needs.

2. The need was felt for a better understanding of Biblical passages relating to divorce and separation and to translate this understanding into the life and practice of the church.

3. It was anticipated that this study would help clergy and laity to become conscious of the intensified isolation and loneliness that is so strongly prevalent among divorced and separated West Indian immigrants and thus become more sensitive to their crisis situation.

4. In the interests of the West Indian churches in New York City, it was expected that the information gained and shared with pastors of West Indian churches would enable them to understand their congregations better and to work toward a more caring ministry.

5. A larger expectation from this study was that reasons for failures in marriage would be discovered, and that with this discovery I could move on to establish positive steps in building solid foundations for present and future marriages.

6. A major expectation was that the concern Jesus had for hurting people will become the concern of the whole church and that from this study other immigrant groups and the church at large will seek to find ways and means to address this growing crisis in the Seventh-day Adventist church.

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE SYNOPTIC STUDY

No nation has ever had higher views of marriage than the Jews; to them it was a sacred institution. They prided themselves on their morality and looked with horror upon the sensual practices of the heathen.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, divorce was quite legal under their interpretation of the Torah. There was, however, no unanimity among them as to the reason for divorce. Barclay claims that two schools of thought existed. The first was that of Hillel, which allowed very liberal grounds for divorce.<sup>2</sup> For example, if a wife had a miscarriage, if she burned the cake she was baking, or even if she spoke of marriage to others while her husband was living she could be divorced. The other school, that of Shammai, was more conservative and had limited grounds for divorce.<sup>3</sup> It was out of this background that Jesus had to settle the question of marriage and divorce.

---

<sup>1</sup>William Barclay, The Gospel of Matthew, 23 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 18:196.

<sup>2</sup>Barclay, p. 198.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

### Statement of the Synoptic Concern

The readings in Matt 5:32 ". . . whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery . . . ." and 19:9 ". . . whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery. . . ." differ considerably from the readings in Mark 10:11-12 ". . . whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another committeth adultery. . . ." and Luke 16:18 ". . . whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery. . . ." Hence, in Matthew there seems to be a tension between Moses and Jesus-God's "original will" and His "circumstantial will."<sup>1</sup> Could it be possible that Matthew's clause "Except for porneia, . . ." is just an interpolation of his own or of the early Church? Or is it in fact the actual words of Jesus?

The differences of opinion on these questions make this study purposeful and relevant. "Except for porneia, . . ." What is the meaning of this clause? Are the words used for fornication and adultery synonymous in context? What was Jesus' emphasis?

### Purpose of the Synoptic Study

The intention of this study in Part I is (1) to examine the apparent tension between Moses and Jesus and the original will of God and His circumstantial will--and thus, to understand the concern of Jesus in relation to marriage and divorce; (2) to research the

---

<sup>1</sup>The writer is using the term "original will" to designate God's ideal plan for man and "circumstantial will" to designate the adjustments or provisions that God makes for man because of man's sinful failure to live God's ideal plan.

genuineness of the Matthean Exceptive Clause (5:32; 19:9) and to find out which of the Synoptic writers was "a priori"; (3) to determine, if possible, the meaning of "porneia" and to study the syntactical relationship between "porneia" and "moicheia"; and (4) to provide suggestions as to how these problems and tensions can be resolved as they appear in the synoptics.

#### Need for the Synoptic Study

Today, the practices of marriage and divorce vary significantly from culture to culture and are often influenced by doctrines and traditions. Most of these doctrines, cultures, and traditions seem to have been inadequately affected by the Biblical mandate and applications of Jesus' teachings on marriage and divorce. Consequently, a gradual deterioration in standards, morality, marriage, and divorce exists. There is, therefore, a genuine need for a re-examination of the words of Jesus, thus making them applicable to real-life situations. It was hoped that with this re-examination, fresh questions would be asked that would result in fresh answers.

#### Limitation of the Synoptic Study

In an effort to keep within the scope and confines of this paper, each issue raised is treated with brevity. Hence, it is more selective than exhaustive. The question of re-marriage is not dealt with; however, this is not intended to minimize its vital importance to this discussion.

It is my belief that a study of the Biblical literature will provide the framework for Part II, an investigation into the needs and concerns of divorced or separated persons.



## CHAPTER II

### THE TRAPPING TEST QUESTION: IS IT LAWFUL FOR A MAN TO PUT AWAY HIS WIFE FOR EVERY CAUSE?

#### Background to the Question

For almost two years the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem commissioned spies to follow Jesus, perhaps with the twofold objective of finding some accusation to bring against Him as well as attempting to embarrass or discredit Him in the eyes of His listeners. Twice, prior to the feast of Tabernacles, attempts had been made to stone Jesus in Jerusalem (John 8:58-59; 10:31). Such attempts had become repeated practice and His life was in danger.

Since the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9), the Scribes and Pharisees had sought to entrap Jesus with questions calculated to elicit statements that might later be made the basis of the charges against Him (Mark 7:2-5). In Matt 18 Jesus gave a complete discourse on "How to Treat the Offending Brothers." It is quite possible that His hearers were startled by His radical suggestion of a "seventy-times-seven" forgiveness; they were no doubt curious to hear Him again.

It is easy, therefore, to understand why they would follow Him from Galilee to Judah as He continued His discourse. It was in Judah, beyond the Jordan, in the company of a large multitude, that the

Pharisees grasped the opportune moment of starting their interrogation.

No nation had ever had a higher view of marriage than did the Jewish people. To remain unmarried after the age of twenty, except in order to concentrate upon the study of the law, was to break a positive commandment to be "fruitful and multiply."<sup>1</sup>

The Jews did not question the legality of divorce; they felt that it was legalized by Deut 24:1-2. However, they debated about the scope and limits of reasons for divorce. They discussed the matter on the basis of the words "erwat debar"<sup>2</sup> which means, when taken in that order, "some indecency, or unseemly thing." Or which, in reverse order, means "a matter of unchastity."<sup>3</sup>

The followers of Hillel were more lenient or liberal in their views. Several historians agree that the Hillel school contended that a man might divorce his wife for various causes quite unconnected with the infringement of the marriage vow. For example, "because he had ceased to love her, or had seen someone else whom he liked better, or even because she cooked his meal badly."<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the school of Shammai was more strict or conservative. It permitted divorce only on the grounds of fornication

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<sup>1</sup>Barclay, p. 196.

<sup>2</sup>David Hill, Gospel of Matthew (London: Butler & Turner, 1972), p. 279.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>H. Spence and J.S. Exell, The Pulpit Commentary, 23 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977), 15:242.

or some offence against chastity.<sup>1</sup> This was the background to the question that was asked of Jesus. The atmosphere was vexed and troubled, the antagonistic parties were tense and bitter, and, to worsen the situation, it was the school of Hillel whose teachings prevailed.<sup>2</sup> The marriage bond was often lightly held and divorce on the most trivial ground was sadly common.<sup>3</sup>

### Do You Permit Divorce?

As the Pharisees opened their campaign in the matter of divorce, their question was clear and concise, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason" (Matt 19:3, NIV)? This question seems to be an attempt to draw Jesus into a controversy between the Jewish schools as to the meaning of Deut 24:1.

No argument should be made as to which Rabbinic school was most interested in the question. It could have been the concerned Shammais. Their strict teachings were rejected by the masses; hence, they were now seeking endorsement from Jesus for their interpretation.

Similarly, it could have been the satisfied Hillels who wanted encouragement for their lax, accepted teachings. Moreover this was a delicate question to raise in the domains of Herod Antipas—delicate because of what had happened to John the Baptist (Matt 14:8-11). Christ had already touched this subject twice, first, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:33), and, second when reasoning with the Pharisees on the due observance of the law (Luke 15:18).

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Barclay, p. 199.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Between the contending parties, the Pharisees desired an answer to their question, thinking that they might place Jesus in a dilemma. According to Henry:

If He should say that divorce were not lawful, they would see Him as an enemy to the law of Moses. If He should say it were, they would criticize His doctrine as not having that perfection in it which was expected of the Messiah.<sup>1</sup>

Another way to look at the question is this: If He took the popular view, they could deride His claims as a teacher of superior morality. If He upheld the most strict view, He would arouse the enmity of the majority, and possibly, like John the Baptist, involve Himself in trouble with the licentious Tetrarch. So, He did not answer the question directly.

#### The Fundamental Question

For the moment, Jesus disregarded the particular question put to Him, and took up the deeper question behind it. "Haven't you read," He asked, "that at the beginning the creator made them male and female?" (Matt 19:4; NIV). Howley confirms that the Law contains more than the divorce laws of the Mosaic Code (Deut 24:1). Included is the nature of marriage as the story of Creation defines it. He states that the former law is more binding than the latter. The order of things in the beginning is not rendered null and void by what follows after.<sup>2</sup> For Jesus, the Creator is primary and Moses is secondary.

Harvey agrees with Howley when he states that:

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible, 6 vols. (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.), 5:267.

<sup>2</sup>G. E. Howley, E.F. Bruce, and H.C. Ellison, A New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1966), p. 108.

Jesus, instead of concentrating on a text which referred only to the practical and legal question of divorce, drew attention to another part of Scripture which was generally agreed to provide positive teaching about the nature of marriage.<sup>1</sup>

Christ gave a full answer by asking a question, "Have you read . . . ?" His answer was not direct but effective. He reiterated principles that were from the beginning. It is Henry's belief that Jesus was saying:

If husband and wife are by the will and appointment of God joined together in the strictest and close union, then they are not to be lightly and upon every occasion be separated; if the knot be sacred, it cannot be easily untied.<sup>2</sup>

In accordance with what Henry states, Christ wanted to show that there is such a sacred union between man and wife. Hence, He urged three things: (1) the creation of Adam and Eve; (2) the fundamental law of marriage; and (3) the nature of the marriage contract.

The genius of Jesus' answer is seen in the fact that neither school could oppose Him for basing the question upon an undisputed scripture: "In the beginning." Boles argues that they (Adam and Eve) were made in the beginning as a pair: therefore, they should be united in pairs and remain as God ordained.<sup>3</sup>

#### Creation Re-Iterated

Jesus' answer was to take things back to the beginning, back to the ideals of Creation. "In the beginning," He said, "God made

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<sup>1</sup>A. E. Harvey, Companion to the New English Bible (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 76.

<sup>2</sup>Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible, 5:268.

<sup>3</sup>Leo Boles, The Gospel According to Matthew (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1976), p. 387.

them male and female" (Matt 19:4). Barclay comments on this by saying, "Inevitable in the very circumstances of the creation story, Adam and Eve were created for each other and no one else, their union was necessarily complete and unbreakable."<sup>1</sup>

To enhance the understanding of this unity a transliteration of Gen 1:27 is helpful. As it appears in the Greek Septuagint it is not andra kai gonaika eponoen autos that is, a male and a female, but apoan kai anau enau, that is, He made them male and female. The latter rendition of the Greek shows that they were implicitly shut up in one.

Dods and Alexander put it succinctly. They state, "One male and one female, so that the one should have the other; for if He had wished that the male should dismiss one and marry another, he would have made more females."<sup>2</sup>

Some critics have asked, what arguments can be drawn from the circumstances of God's creating them male and female (Gen 1:27) to show His intent in the insolubility of marriage? Howley has proposed that it seems more as an argument against polygamy than divorce. However, he contends that Gen 2:24 clarifies the insolubility of the union. With the emphasis being placed on "one flesh," he argues that from this Moses infers that the mutual attachment of the married couple should be complete.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Barclay, 18:200.

<sup>2</sup>Marcus Dods and Bruce Alexander, "The Synoptic Gospel", in The Expositors Greek Testament (London: Hodder & Stoughton, n.d), p. 246.

<sup>3</sup>Howley et al., A New Testament Commentary, p. 108.

According to the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, "the Law of Gen 1:27 and 2:24 preceded the law of Deut 24:1-4 and is superior to it, for in the Eden period of Genesis, God's ideal for His children is set forth."<sup>1</sup>

Henry claims that "Eve was a rib out of Adam's side, so that he could not put her away, but he must put away a piece of himself and contradict the manifest indications of her creation."<sup>2</sup>

Summarizing the answer given to the critics' question it can be seen that Jesus cited Gen 1:27 and 2:24 to show the cohesion the marriage tie produces between man and woman. One was the complement of the other, and this perfect union must last as long as life. For Adam and Eve, divorce was not only inadvisable, it was not only wrong, it was in one sense impossible. The word used is sunagauzan, "yoked together" or "joined together." The aorist here is timeless.

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<sup>1</sup>"Leave Father and Mother" Matt 19:5, SDA Bible Commentary, ed., F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1953-57), 5:457.

<sup>2</sup>Henry, p. 269.

## CHAPTER III

### MOSES' DISMISSAL NOTICE

The fact that the Pharisees asked another question suggests that they were not satisfied with the answer Jesus gave. "Why then did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" (Matt 19:7, NIV). Here is an indication of their desperation, a question that is designed to trap, to embarrass, and to defeat. White confirms that the "Pharisees had signally failed to subvert the authority of Jesus or to alleviate the respect and attention of the people."<sup>1</sup> This further aroused their bitterness and hatefulness against Him.

Instantaneously, the Pharisees saw another point of attack. Moses had said, "...Let him write a bill of divorce..." (Deut 24:1). Here was the very chance they wanted, for they could now say to Jesus, "Are you saying Moses is wrong? Are you seeking to abrogate the divine Law that was given to Moses? Are you setting yourself above Moses as Law giver?" "The Pharisees seem," write Dods and Alexander, "to have regarded Moses as a portion of the practice of putting away rather than as one bent on mitigating its evil result."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen White, Desire of Ages (Washington, DC: Review & Herald Pub. Assn., 1974), p. 213.

<sup>2</sup>Dods and Alexander, p. 246.



By way of elaboration Henry suggests that:

The Bill of Divorce must be written and as a Judicial Act, must have all the solemnities of a deed, executed and enrolled. It must be given into the hands of the wife herself (which would oblige men, if they had any consideration in them to consider). They then were expressly forbidden even to come together again.<sup>1</sup>

To understand why divorce was so widely practiced one would have to look at the Jewish concept of women in general. To begin with, in the eyes of the Jewish Law, a woman was a thing, she was the possession of her father or husband. Technically speaking, she had no legal rights at all.<sup>2</sup> Barclay explains that most Jewish marriages were arranged either by the parents or by professional matchmakers.<sup>3</sup>

Moses' permission for divorce can be seen in the light of his effort to moralize a deteriorated condition and to protect women in particular. Moffat confirms this point by stating that "The Deuteronomic Law quoted in verse 7 was an amelioration of the woman's state, and conferred on her a certain right."<sup>4</sup>

How true it is that if a woman were simply dismissed, her lot would be hard, for no other man could dare to take her into his household. She was therefore to be provided with a separate notice, stating that she was no longer claimed by her husband and was therefore under no obligation or tie to him.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Henry, p. 269.

<sup>2</sup>Barclay, p. 297.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>James Moffat, "The Gospel of Matthew" in The Moffat New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1951), pp. 158-159.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

Criticizing the Past

To the Pharisees the Law of Moses equaled the Law of God. Hence, their contention was, if the Law of Moses allowed for divorce, how could anyone say that divorce was contrary to the will of God? For Jesus, even though the Law of Moses was unquestionably the revealed will of God for man, He frankly pronounced it to have been conditioned by the circumstances in which it was given. What then were these conditions?

According to Deut 9:6 and 31:37, Moses complained that the people of Israel in His time had hardened their hearts, hardened against God and their relations with one another. They were generally violent and outrageous, both in their appetite and in their passions.

Here was a deterioration of God's original standard for His people. One author indicates that

If they [Israel] had not been allowed to put away their wives, when they had conceived a dislike for them they would have used them cruelly, beaten and abused them, and perhaps would have murdered them. Therefore, they were allowed to put them away.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus therefore explains in His answer that what Moses said was not in fact Law, but a concession. Moses did not command divorce: at best he only permitted it in order to regulate a situation which would have been chaotically promiscuous. The Mosaic regulation was only a concession to fallen human nature.<sup>2</sup>

It is of interest to note that the Pharisees called what Moses did a "command." Compare anatailato (vs. 7) with anatrappay (vs. 8). The Pharisees used anatailato (command); Jesus used anatrappay

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<sup>1</sup>Henry, p. 269.

<sup>2</sup>Barclay, p. 201.

(permitted). Here Jesus endorsed Moses' "permission," but out of this he criticized the circumstances that generated this permission. Dods and Alexander mention that Moses is respectfully spoken of as one who would gladly have welcomed a better state of things.<sup>1</sup>

The condition under which Moses gave the permission is enforced by the Greek word sklarokarsian. This word is found here and in several other places in the Septuagint. It points to a state of heart which cannot submit to restraints of a high and holy law. It literally means "uncircumcisedness of heart"<sup>2</sup> (Deut 10:16). In summarizing, Schaeffer states: Moses did not recommend, much less did he command divorce as these Pharisees appear to say. . . . He simply placed restrictions on the custom . . . by requiring certain writings."<sup>3</sup>

In conclusion, Jesus said to the Pharisees, "True, Moses permitted divorce, but that was a concession in view of a lost ideal. The ideal of marriage is still to be found in the unbreakable perfect union of Adam and Eve."<sup>4</sup>

#### Original Intention

Fundamentally speaking, Jesus' discussion of the marriage relationship and its responsibilities is based on God's original plan for the home as stated in Gen 2:21-24 and not on the Mosaic Law.

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<sup>1</sup>Dods and Alexander, p. 246.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Charles F. Schaeffer, Annotations on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1895), p. 71.

<sup>4</sup>Barclay, p. 197.

"In that plan," according to the Seventh-day Adventist Commentary, "marriage was intended to meet the need for companionship and to provide a proper home."<sup>1</sup> For Allen, the idea seems to be that God created a single pair who were therefore destined for one another.<sup>2</sup> In the providence of God the divorce institution was designed to bless and uplift humanity.<sup>3</sup>

The companionship of the husband and wife was ordained of God as the ideal environment in which to mature Christian character; hence, divorce should be out of the question. The ideal was, "They both should become one flesh" (Gen 2:24).

#### One Flesh

According to Harrington:

Simply the one flesh cannot be broken, nothing--no written or oral legal code, no document, no piece of paper, no custom, no ceasing of cohabitation between marriage partners, not even loss of love can possibly break a one-fleshedness.<sup>4</sup>

He says it cannot be dissolved, it cannot disappear, for the act of sexual intercourse always results in the one flesh regardless of the moral purity of the union.<sup>5</sup> He goes so far as to state that

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<sup>1</sup>"But I Say" [Matt 5:28], SDA Bible Commentary (1953-57), 5:337.

<sup>2</sup>Willoughby C. Allen, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), p. 203.

<sup>3</sup>"But I Say," 5:337.

<sup>4</sup>W. J. Harrington, "The New Testament and Divorce," Irish Theological Quarterly 39 (2, 1972):187.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

"Christian love must continue faithful even if rejected, loyal, even if deserted, and abiding, even if unrequited."<sup>1</sup>

This interpretation seems to be what might be called "extreme legalism." It sounds more like the "yoke of bondage" (Gal 5:1) that Paul spoke about, or the Law that causes transgression to multiply and "worketh wrath" (Rom 5:20; 4:15).

There are two frames of reference that should be taken note of in regard to "God's original intention." These are (1) a sinless world and (2) a sinful world. Perhaps Harrington's position, namely the indissoluble nature of marriage, exists only in a sinless world. It is obvious that Jesus recognized man's sinful world; hence, He made room for the circumstantial.

Harrington also supports the idea that the mere physical act of sexual intercourse produces this one flesh.<sup>2</sup> He should be reminded of the contemporary questions some theologians are asking. Can the physical consummation of marriage have of itself alone the awesome power of rendering definitive and irreversible a human and personal commitment in which agreement of minds is an essential factor?

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER IV

### PARALLELS IN THE SYNOPTICS

All along it has been assumed that the reader has available the principal pericope on divorce (Matt 19:3-9). However, at this point it becomes necessary for the four logia on divorce to be seen synoptically.

Matt 5:32

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Luke 16:18

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

Matt 19:9

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Mark 10:11-12

Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Although some scholars have argued that Matthew and Mark are two independent accounts and even two separate incidents, it appears quite clear that they refer to the same incident.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For the view that the accounts in Matthew and Mark are literally independent and that the Matthean version is actually more authentic, see D. L. Dugan, The Sayings of Jesus in the Church of Paul (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), pp. 122-125.

1. Both accounts have the same geographical setting: the region of Judaea beyond Jordan (Mark 10:1; Matt 19:1).

2. Both accounts have the same audience: the Pharisees (Mark 10:2; Matt 19:13).

3. In both accounts the question asked of Jesus is essentially the same: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife (for any cause)?" (Mark 10:2; Matt 19:3).

4. The Old Testament quotations are the same: Deut 24:1 (Mark 10:4; Matt 19:7); Gen 1:27 (Mark 10:16; Matt 19:4); Gen 2:24 (Mark 10:7-8; Matt 19:5).

5. The reply of the Pharisees is the same; they referred to Deut 24:1 (Mark 10:4; Matt 19:7).

6. Jesus' explanation is the same: Moses allowed this because of man's heart (Mark 10:5; Matt 19:8).

7. Both accounts are followed by the same incident: Jesus blesses the children (Mark 10:13-16; Matt 19:13-15).

Therefore it seems clear that although Jesus may have discussed this issue on several occasions, because of the great similarities involved it is most doubtful that Matthew and Mark can be referring to two separate incidents. It is possible, however, according to Robert Stein,<sup>1</sup> that while Matthew and Mark refer to the same incident, one of them (Matthew) may have inserted into the

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<sup>1</sup>R. H. Stein, "Is It Lawful for a Man to Divorce His Wife?" Journal of the Evangelical Society 22 (2, 1979): 115-21.

account a saying of Jesus that was uttered at a different time or that one (Mark) may have omitted a saying that was uttered at that time.<sup>1</sup>

A second look at the passages as they appear in the New International Version is helpful to the discussion.

1. Matt 19:9: "I tell you that any one who divorces his wife 'except for marital unfaithfulness', and marries another woman, commits adultery."

2. Mark 10:11,12: "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another man she commits adultery."

3. Luke 16:18: "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman, commits adultery."

It is obvious from these parallel accounts that Mark and Luke are similar, that is, no exception is mentioned for divorce, whereas in Matthew, the text has this exception. What then should we ask? Was Mark original? Was Matthew redacting, or was Matthew's clause just an interpolation?

#### Exceptive Clause

"Except for porneia . . . (Matt 19:9; 5:32)" Richard Taylor affirms that for a long time exegetes were undivided on the validity of this text. "Neither Christ, nor St. Matthew nor St. Paul allowed

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<sup>1</sup>According to Stein, this latter solution does not solve everything but, in fact, raises a number of even more difficult questions. It is easier to understand how Matthew could clarify a general overstatement made by Jesus. On the other hand, a Markan-Lukan-Pauline omission of the exception clause would no longer be a clarification but a removal of Jesus' one provision for divorce.



divorce on any grounds whatever."<sup>1</sup> For some the phrase in Matt 5:32; 19:9, which seems to provide for the exception, was no exception at all. No matter how obscure and difficult, it could never be interpreted as allowing for divorce.<sup>2</sup> Those who argue against this exception feel like Sabourin<sup>3</sup>—there are several instances in Matthew which show that this gospel reflects the desire of a church to use tradition in order to solve concrete problems.

H. G. Koiner<sup>4</sup> in his article, "Those Divorce and Remarriage Passages" (Matt 5:32; 19:9), quotes T. W. Manson as saying, "I assume that it is as certain as anything can be in the New Testament criticism that the qualifications parektos logue porneia and me epi porneia are not part of the genuine teachings of Jesus."<sup>5</sup> Alfred Plummer believes that "the 'exceptive clause' was never uttered by Jesus."<sup>6</sup> Neither does Floyd Filson who adds that, "Matthew adopts his teaching to support the strict line of Jewish teaching."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>R. J. Taylor, "Divorce in Matthew 5:32; 19:9: Theological Research and Pastoral Care," Clergy Review 55 (10, 1970): 792.

<sup>2</sup>Taylor, 55:792.

<sup>3</sup>L. Sabourin, "The Divorce Clauses (Matt 5:32; 19:9)," Biblical Theological Bulletin 21 (1, 1972):80.

<sup>4</sup>Koiner feels that the explanation of the parables reported in Matt 13 constitutes an instance of this.

<sup>5</sup>H. G. Koiner, "Those Divorce and Remarriage Passages (Matt 5:32; 19:9; 1 Cor 7:10-16), With Brief Reference to the Mark and Luke Passages," Concordia Theological Monthly 39 (6, 1966):372.

<sup>6</sup>Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Elliot Stock, 1909), p. 81.

<sup>7</sup>Floyd V. Filson, A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (New York: Harper & Bros., 1960), p. 207.

"There is a general consensus among the interpreters that the Markan and Lukan passages give more certain and clearer teachings on divorce and remarriage," says Koiner.<sup>1</sup> According to him, St. Augustine already asserted that the Matthean version of the logion must be interpreted in the light of Mark and Luke.

Similarly, Robert Stein contends that "it is far more likely that Matthew would have sought to explain what Jesus meant by adding the 'exceptive clause', than that Mark would have the saying more difficult by omitting it."<sup>2</sup>

These scholars and others propose that Matthew introduced into the traditional formulation of Jesus' pronouncement an exception.<sup>3</sup> He apparently meant to temper its intransigence. He did so, first, in one of the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:32).<sup>4</sup> Then he repeated this exception in the historical context<sup>5</sup> of Mark's framework (19:9).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Koiner, p. 372.

<sup>2</sup>Stein, 22:115.

<sup>3</sup>Emil Brunner, The Divine Imperative (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), p. 651, says: "It is my definite conviction which I hold in common with many other scholars, that this phrase 'save for the cause of fornication', was not uttered by Jesus Himself, but that it is an interpolation by the early Church.

<sup>4</sup>The exceptive clause of Matthew differs slightly in its formulation, but it is obvious that the Evangelist intended the propositions to express the same teachings. Sabourin, p. 81.

<sup>5</sup>Sabourin believes that Mark wrote before Matthew; therefore, Matthew used Mark's historical document (Mark 10:11-12) and inserted the exceptive clause (see Matt 19:9).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

T. L. Thompson, in his article "A Catholic's View on Divorce," states that in order to present or develop a Roman Catholic position on divorce, we cannot limit ourselves to the Council of Trent. We cannot say, he argues, that because divorce was forbidden then it is forbidden to us now according to the Faith of our Church. However, he continues, "neither can we say that because Origen, St. Basil, and Pope Gregory II allowed divorce, the statements of Trent are fallacious."<sup>1</sup>

Thompson uses those opening remarks in an article that seeks to establish the invalidity of the exceptive clause of Matthew. He suggests that Matthew's exception contradicts what Jesus had said earlier about the Law from Genesis, as well as what He says to His disciples in what follows. Thompson indicates that this exception makes Jesus seem to say what they themselves (that is, the early editors of Matthew) want to say.

For David Catchpole,<sup>2</sup> there is consistent incoherence in Matthew. He cites four areas: (1) vss. 10-12 do not arise out of vss. 3-9; (2) vs. 9 does not cohere with vss. 4-8; (3) vss. 4-8 do not cohere with vs. 3b; (4) vs. 3b does not cohere with vs. 31. These inconsistencies invalidate the "Matthean exception."

While the above authors challenge the exceptive there are those who defend it. Koerner contends there are no manuscripts which suggest that this is the case. He says that the evidence to support

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<sup>1</sup>T. L. Thompson, "A Catholic's View on Divorce," Journal of Ecclesiastical Status 6 (1, 1969):53-54.

<sup>2</sup>David Catchpole, "The Synoptic Divorce Material as a Traditio-Historical Problem," Bulletin of the John Hylands Library 57 (1, 1974):92.

this argument for interpolation is not convincing enough to warrant unqualified acceptance.<sup>1</sup> Says Mahoney:

The current text of the exceptive clause of Matt 5:32; 19:9, is generally conceded to be authentic. The reading 'parektos logue porneia' is attested by the whole ms. tradition, without variants.<sup>2</sup>

Commentators generally acknowledge that there are no textual reasons for thinking that the clauses are not genuine.<sup>3</sup> Krister Stendahl argues that it is not necessary to consider the "exceptive clause" as a later concession to compromise in Church discipline, in view of the law which requires divorce in the case where a woman had committed fornication.<sup>4</sup>

The acceptance and usage of this "exceptive clause" of Matthew by most of the early Church Fathers<sup>5</sup> is a matter of record. We can

<sup>1</sup>Koiner, p. 367. "It does not seem possible to adduce any textual arguments against the genuineness of these clauses."

<sup>2</sup>A. Mahoney, "A New Look at the Divorce Clauses in Matt 5:32; 19:9," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 30 (1, 1968):30.

<sup>3</sup>Koiner, p. 367.

<sup>4</sup>Krister Stendahl, "Matthew," Pearks Commentary on the Bible (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1962), p. 777.

<sup>5</sup>Origen states that there is one exception to this seemingly absolute prohibition of divorce, namely, the clause in Matt 19:9. He regards divorce and remarriage as permissible. Specifically he says, Our Lord has permitted dissolution (of the marriage bond) solely in the case of a wife convicted of misconduct.

St. Hilary states that a husband would be defiled by continuing marriage with a wife who had committed adultery. St. Jerome says that only fornication takes away the legal condition of a wife. Since she split the one flesh asunder and separated herself from the husband by fornication, she must not be held onto, less she should bring a curse upon the husband.

St. Basil says, "The declaration of the Lord, that it is not permitted to separate a marriage except for the cause of fornication, applies equally to man as to woman." Ambrosiaster, an influential commenter on the Pauline Epistles (4th century), clearly allows remarriage when there is a reputation of misconduct.

also draw support for the "exceptive clause" of Matthew from the variant readings in Matthew of the ancient manuscripts.<sup>1</sup>

### Markan Priority

It is significant that most if not all who argue against Matthew's "exceptive clause" defend a Markan priority. According to Stein, the most accepted conclusion among scholars today is that Mark more accurately reflects the actual words of Jesus. His reason for drawing this conclusion he says, is "that Matthew did in fact use Mark."<sup>2</sup>

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In brief, a few other church fathers state that fornication on the part of the wife either demands divorce or gives the right to divorce. These include: Hermas, ca. 165; Glement of Alexandra, ca. 217; Tertullian, 247; Lactantius, ca. 330; St. Gregory of Nazianzus, 325-407; St. Ephiphanius, 403; St. Chromatius, 407; St. Augustine, 604; and Theodoret, 393-457.

For the source on Church Fathers see Koerner, p. 374.

#### <sup>1</sup>Received Text — Matt 19:9

"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife except for adultery and marries another, commits adultery."

#### Codex Vaticanus (early 4th century)

"And I say to you, that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of adultery, causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a woman so divorced, commits adultery."

#### Codex Ephraemi (original - 5th century)

"And I say to you, that anyone who divorces his wife except on the ground of adultery causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a woman so divorced, commits adultery."

#### Codex Bezae (5th and 6th century)

"And I say to you, that anyone who divorces his wife except on the ground of adultery causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a woman so divorced commits adultery."

#### Codex Vaticanus (6th century)

"And I say to you, that anyone who divorces his wife except on the ground of adultery causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a woman so divorced commits adultery."

For these early manuscript readings see Koerner pp. 374-375.

<sup>2</sup>Stein, 22:117.

Catchpole emphatically states that the purpose of his article is to examine the relationship between the traditions, including an attempt to marshall evidence in favor of the two-document hypothesis.<sup>1</sup> Thompson, in the midst of an argument against the "exceptive clause" of Matthew adds however that Matthew is not totally dependent on Mark.<sup>2</sup>

Mark Geldard joins the ranks of the theologians who think that Mark was a priori. Each time he quotes both books (i.e., Matthew and Mark) he places Mark first. As a matter of fact the entire construction of his essay (which is considered shortly) is based upon this premise.<sup>3</sup>

#### Two-Document Hypothesis

The fact that there are so many scholars who argue in favor of a Markan priority makes it important to outline the Two-Document Hypothesis, as it is commonly called. Lachmann (1831), a philologist and classicist, observed that Matthew and Luke agree with each other in sequence only when they have the same sequence as Mark. Therefore, he concludes that Mark is the earliest of the three. Matthew combined with Mark is a collection of sayings.<sup>4</sup>

Holtzmann (1863) was the strongest advocate of the primacy of Mark and its utilization by Matthew and Luke, who besides utilizing

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<sup>1</sup>Catchpole, 57:92.

<sup>2</sup>Thompson, 6:53-54.

<sup>3</sup>Mark Geldard, "Jesus' Teaching on Divorce: Thoughts on the Meaning of Porneia in Matt 5:32; 19:9," Churchman 92 (2, 1978):136-138.

<sup>4</sup>Abraham Terian, Class Lecture (Andrews University, September 1981).

Mark used another source (Q = hypothetical source of sayings) which lies at the basis of the material common to Matthew and Luke. (This is the Two-Document Hypothesis).<sup>1</sup>

### Matthean Priority

The Holtzmannian hypothesis never enjoyed absolute consensus among scholars, even though it was favored by the majority. Two major difficulties with this theory were recognized even by those who favored it:

1. Luke not only offers material that is peculiar to him or common with Matthew but also differs considerably in passages paralleled with Mark (especially with the passion).
2. Dependencies of Mark on Matthew are occasionally seen.

How does one explain these?

William Farmer<sup>2</sup> seems to be the strongest proponent of the Matthean priority.<sup>3</sup> His bold approach challenges the Two-Document Hypothesis theory. Regressing to the eighteenth-century beginnings of this theory, he demonstrates step by step how the world of Biblical scholarship slid into accepting it (that is, Holtzmann's theory of a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>William Farmer, The Synoptic Problem A Critical Analysis (Dillsboro, NC: Western North Carolina Press, 1976).

<sup>3</sup>Two of the Utilization Hypothesis suggest: (1) Matthew-Luke-Mark, accepted by Augustine (Mark utilizes and condenses Matthew); (2) Matthew-Luke-Mark, the so-called Griesbach hypothesis 1789 (Mark utilizes both Matthew and Luke). The most notable evidence for this view was shown by F. Bleek, An Introduction to the New Testament (1866); Mark 1:32 "When evening became, after the sun was set" is composed of Matt 8:16 "When evening became" and Luke 4:40 "After the sun was set." In a similar vein, A. Isaksson has sharply criticized the Two-Document Hypothesis as has D. L. Dungen.

Markan priority) on quite inadequate grounds. Consequently, as a result of this scholarly work a great number of twentieth-century theologians are now accepting a Matthean priority of the Synoptics.

### The Meaning of Porneia

Mark Geldard in his introductory material to his essay "Jesus' Teaching on Divorce" submits that:

In working towards a picture of Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage, the vital importance of establishing the meaning of porneia is not disputed. In the Biblical record of Jesus' teaching, porneia is the only possible ground He offers for divorce and remarriage. But what does porneia mean in these verses?<sup>1</sup>

This question, then—what does porneia mean in these verses?—is that which this chapter seeks to answer. Geldard maintains that on simple and straight-forward linguistic grounds, porneia cannot be taken here (Matt 19:9) to mean adultery. It does not normally mean adultery, he contends, and goes on to say that Matthew assumes a distinction between adultery and porneia.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the debating point has often been whether or not porneia in Matt 5:32 and 19:9 includes adultery: that is, whether or not porneia (here) has a wider meaning denoting general sexual irregularity and including both adultery and pre-marital fornication; or a narrower meaning, that is adultery only. Given the wider meaning represents Jesus as teaching the dissolubility of marriage on general sexual grounds, including adultery.

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<sup>1</sup>Geldard, 92:134.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



Geldard, suggests that the argument for translating porneia with the wider meaning in Matt 5 and 19 cannot, on further consideration, be substantiated, and thus we may have to seek a narrower interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

In establishing his narrower meaning of porneia, Geldard indicates four reasons why porneia could not be given a wider meaning. These are:

1. The linguistic<sup>2</sup> consideration. He suggests that if Matthew wanted to speak of wider sexual irregularity, he would use not just the expression pornei (as the advocates of a wider meaning suggest) but rather the words porneia and moicheia together.

2. An internal contradiction. He says there are two points to consider: (a) the nature of the Pharisees' question, that is, their scheme to bring Jesus into conflict with the teaching, the concession of Moses who allowed divorce (if Jesus was not in fact teaching complete indissolubility, their trick had no substance); and (b) a wider meaning which would contradict Jesus on absolute indissolubility (Mark 10:2-12; Matt 19:3-8).

3. The conflict with Moses. If porneia is given the wider meaning, there would not be a conflict between Jesus and Moses. But the Pharisees certainly understood Jesus' teaching to be in conflict with Moses. This clear conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees logically rules out the wider meaning.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 135-38.

<sup>2</sup>The opposite view is held by Mahoney in 30:30.

4. An impossible exegesis. If in our exegesis we ascribe the wider meaning to porneia in vs. 9, then we come to the conclusion that Jesus taught the indissolubility of marriage save for sexual irregularity, including pre-marital fornication and adultery. One can therefore conclude that Jesus' teaching on divorce was identical with that of the Shammaites. This, says Geldard, with the rest of the text is an impossible exegesis.

In reacting to Geldards' four reasons against the "wider meaning" of porneia, it is helpful to note:

1. His linguistic consideration is not justifiable. The question is, Why should he require Matthew to use "porneia" and "moicheia" to speak of wider sexual irregularity—that is, if he already admitted (and rightly so) that porneia includes moicheia? Would not this be an unnecessary repetition?

2. His stated internal contradiction. For him, the trick of the Pharisees' question was to bring Jesus in contradiction with Moses' concession. However, a careful analysis of the passage would show that the Pharisees' desire was to bring Jesus into conflict with the two leading schools. Also, when Jesus reiterated Gen 2:27, He was not making or passing a law but rather reflecting on what God's original intention was (all things being equal).

3. The conflict with Moses. Here, as before, a contextual evaluation of the Matthean passage (19:3-9) does not reveal a conflict. What Jesus in fact did was to affirm Moses' permission and portray the conditions under which it was given.

4. An impossible exegesis. Geldard's conclusion on his four-point reaction to a "wider meaning" on porneia seems plausible at

first glance. One should admit, too, that this seems to be his strongest reason. However, the exegesis is not impossible, as he suggests, if one understands the whole purpose and meaning of Jesus' ministry. (This issue is addressed in the following chapter.) A closer look at the word *porneia* helps one to derive a better understanding of its meaning.

This controversial word "*porneia*" occurs twenty-six times in the New Testament and raises several questions: (1) What is the meaning of *porneia*? (2) Can *porneia* be limited only to sexual relationship outside of marriage? (3) Does *porneia* mean more than adultery? (4) Are *porneia* and *moicheia* synonymous?

While these questions are legitimate, space does not allow a detailed discussion of them. There is, however, a rule to look at in an attempt to provide satisfactory answers. The rule states: "A word does not have meaning without a context and it is only meaningful within its context." So the immediate context must first be determined before a correct interpretation of the text can take place.

The immediate context of *porneia* is Matt 19; its background is Deut 24:1. According to the school of Hillel, in Deut 24:1 "some indecency" should be interpreted to mean anything, that is, any trivial matter. For Shammai it can only be one thing, that is unchastity.<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy, however, does not help us to find the true context of Matt 19.

According to James T. Cox, the word *porneia* has several meanings; six are listed here: (1) refusal to grant conjugal rights

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<sup>1</sup>W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann Matthew, Anchor Bible, 1 vol. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1971), pp. 224-28.

(1 Cor 7), (2) adultery, (3) incest and comparable sexual relationships, (4) any sexual deviation, (5) prostitution, and (6) pre-marital lapse of wife which only comes to light after marriage (Deut 22:13-14).<sup>1</sup>

These differences in meaning can also be seen in numerous New Testament translations of Matt 19.<sup>2</sup> The problem here, then, is really one of translation. There are schools of thought that translate *porneia* as an inclusive term; for others it is translated exclusively.

It is helpful at this point to look at two types of word studies in order to concretize the point that contextual translation of a word is vital to its true understanding and meaning. These are: (1) diachronic study and (2) synchronic study. The former is simply going back into the origin of the word as it appears in its history. This enlarges the understanding of the historical meaning of the word. This type of study, however, has its limitations because words do change in meaning. For example, "prevent" in 1 Thess 4:15 means to precede; today "prevent" means to hinder. The synchronic type of study is to recognize the word in its given context. For example, agapa, the Greek word for love has several meanings, depending on its context.

This explanation is necessary in order to point out that *porneia* in its original historical context is related to mōpan,

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<sup>1</sup>James T. Cox, Class Lectures (West Indies College, July 1979).

<sup>2</sup>(1) The Rye Study Bible, (2) New Testament in Modern English, (3) New Testament Translated.

meaning prostitution and, significantly, a male prostitute.<sup>1</sup> However, this does not carry the same meaning everywhere in the New Testament (1 Cor 7), so the word has to be considered either diachronically or synchronically depending on its context. The already-stated point then that porneia has several meanings now justifies the argument that as it is used in Matt 19, it must be taken in context and not as a general use in the New Testament.

The question now is, What is the syntactical relationship between porneia and moicheia as they appear in Matt 19:9? To provide an answer the following illustration is given. In John 7:37-38 Christ states, "If anyone thirst let him come, he who believes let him drink." Here thirsting and believing come close together. At point X, they intersect taking on the same meaning as shown in Figure 1:

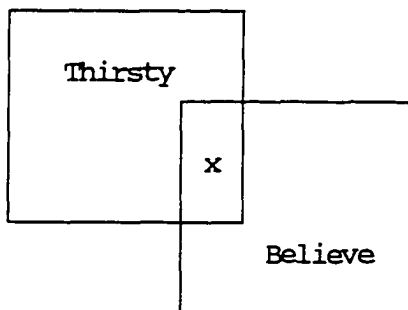


Figure 1. The Meaning of Believe

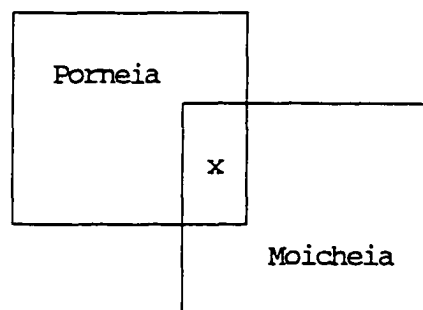


Figure 2. The Meaning of Porneia

The same principle applies in figure 2. Porneia and moicheia in Matt 19:9 are two different words, but there is a point at which

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<sup>1</sup>Porneia denotes prostitution, unchastity, fornication, and every kind of unlawful intercourse. See Koiner, p. 376.

they intersect. Thus at X they take on the same meaning. Therefore, porneia cannot be limited exegetically to adultery.<sup>1</sup>

In light of this, the suggestion is that Christ's conditional clause "except for porneia" should not be limited to adultery, for there are other acts of porneia such as "bestiality" (Exod 12:9), "incest" which is carnal intercourse between kin (1 Cor 5:1), and pre-marital unchastity (Deut 22:20-21). All these are violations of the marriage bond and would seem to be legitimate grounds for divorce. A better contextual understanding would be to see Jesus' deep concern, not so much to find a cure for a perverted situation but to advocate its prevention.

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<sup>1</sup>On simple and straightforward linguistic grounds, porneia cannot be taken here to mean adultery (Geldard, p. 134). It must be admitted that the meaning of porneia is certainly very wide and may well be, as some say, the more inclusive term, including the meaning moicheia. (Koerner, p. 376).

## CHAPTER V

### ANOTHER LOOK AT THE EXCEPTIVE CLAUSE

This chapter is primarily designed to ask questions and to present suggestions relative to the previous discussion. It is constructed on the premise that Matthew is a priori to Mark and Luke, and that the exceptive clause in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 is the original saying of Jesus. Having said this, a starting point could well be to suggest a plausible exegesis of the text (Matt 19:9). "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife except for 'unfaithfulness' to the marriage vow and marries another woman, commits adultery." "Unfaithfulness to the marriage vow . . ." could mean anything that breaks through and destroys love, respect, understanding, selflessness, and Godlikeness.

In consideration of the "other look," one should bear in mind two words which might make room for another exegesis: "halakah" and "haggadah." Is Jesus' teaching to be regarded more as "halakah," that is, the laying down of rules not to be broken? or is it more "haggadah," that is, the laying down of ideals in a way that allows more situational flexibility?

Another factor must be considered. Is the text speaking of

habitual<sup>1</sup> sinning, that is, the habitual adulterous person, the one who indulges, the professional fornicator? Or is it referring to the occasional act?

A thought that has often occurred to the author is this: "Is the mere fact that a man and a woman become married sufficient basis for saying God has joined them together? Or is it possible for two people to be married contrary to the requirements of God? If the answer is no, what of unions such as child marriages, slave marriages, marriages of convenience, marriages brought about by pressure against the wishes of the parties involved?

According to B. W. Powers,

If every marriage were to be regarded as according to the will of God, then one must presumably have such an extremely wide concept of the will of God as to be meaningless. . . .<sup>2</sup>

For one to hold such a view would be to make ludicrous any counsel to people to seek the will of God in their choice of a marriage partner, either because any partner would be God's will, or else God would override any wrong choice and only permit the right one.<sup>3</sup>

If it can be conceded that marriages can be contrary to the requirements of God, then there is a greater need for the "exceptive clause" of Matthew. The plea here is for an expansion of this "exceptive clause" in order to embrace the deeper meaning behind Jesus' teaching and the immediate need of the society of the 1980s.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard J. Taylor says, recent explanations of the unchastity clause say that it, too, is a term to cover not just one act, but a pertinacious continuance in infidelity. 55:794.

<sup>2</sup>W. B. Powers, "Marriage and Divorce, The Dispute of Jesus with the Pharisees and Its Inception,:" Colloquium 5 (1, 1972):36.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



Geldard, in giving his fourth point against the "wider" meaning of porneia, suggests that this would result in "an impossible exegesis";<sup>1</sup> because to him Jesus would be teaching the indissolubility of marriage save for sexual irregularity, including pre-marital fornication and adultery. This, he says, would be identical with that of the Shammaites, hence, Jesus would be saying nothing new.<sup>2</sup>

Another look at this exceptive clause, however, reveals that Jesus was not teaching the (lax) view of Hillel nor the strict view of Shammai. Rather He was moving beyond institutionalism to individualism in human relationships. For Jesus, human beings were (and are) more important than an institution. His Christ-like nature cannot allow Him to see human beings suffer because of institutional legalism.

Hence, what Jesus was doing was moving away from a lax, trivial situation, away also from a strict legalistic situation, and into the bowels of mercy, love, compassion, understanding, and forgiveness for the individuals He created, not the institution He inaugurated. Another way to look at His response is that He brought release to the captives of a dehumanizing legalism. One can argue that the entire ministry of Jesus would be a failure had He not brought "release" to suffering human beings (Luke 4:16), release from the power of Satan, release from the power of sin, release from cultic traditions. This release motif runs throughout the Synoptic Gospels and is implicitly shut up in this divorce pericope.

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<sup>1</sup>Geldard, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

### A Meaningful Parallel

A beautiful parallel to marriage is the Sabbath. Both were instituted at Creation. Both came from heaven; both were for the good of man. The Sabbath is a day of rest for man. It should not be a day of lax, trivial activities; neither should it be a day of strict, legalistic observances. To bring its observance into its right focus, its true perspective, Jesus had to explain in Mark 2:27 that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath; that is, it was made for the good of man.

Accordingly, marriage needs to be considered in the same light and exegesis. The analogy here is that marriage was ordained by God for the good of man. Anything that comes short of that ideal is not God's will.

### Matthew and Paul

Thompson contends that the principle of the "exceptive clause" that exists in the Matthean passages is parallel to that of Paul in 1 Cor 7.<sup>1</sup> Paul is writing a letter and discussing general problems and values which are important to him and for the community at Corinth. He feels that the implication of the context of Paul's letter is that divorce is allowable, not on the basis of any special extraordinary authority, but on the basis of the demands of the situation itself.

He claims that Paul, in 1 Cor 7, reinterprets Jesus in a more open fashion—on his own authority, without attempting to twist about the words of Jesus and his own teachings. For Paul, all marriages have a sacred consecrating quality; for the unbelieving husband is

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, p. 64.

consecrated through his wife (vs. 14). It therefore seems that Paul is teaching a special case of privilege.<sup>1</sup>

In vs. 12 he says, "If the unbeliever wishes a divorce, the Christian should let him have it, because after all the most important thing is to live in peace. In fact, that is the meaning of God's call." In other words, if we are faithful to God's call, we should not be forced to suffer the loss of the very peace that God's call promises.

In this passage Thompson believes that Paul has clearly gone beyond the mere question of whether divorce is to be allowed, and he points out the higher Christian values, such as "the peace of the Lord" and the fact that each one must live his life in consideration of these values.<sup>2</sup>

"In the sermon on the mount," says E. G. White, "Jesus declared plainly that there could be no dissolution of the marriage tie, except for unfaithfulness to the marriage vow."<sup>3</sup>

At this point another question may be raised: should one limit the phrase "unfaithfulness to the marriage vow" only to sexual irregularity? Is that the only thing that can break the oneness, the unity, the love, the harmony that God intended to exist in marriage?

Which is the lesser of the two evils? A husband who is an

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing (Mountain View, CA: Review & Herald Pub. Assn., 1974), p. 63.

adulterer<sup>1</sup> or a husband that is a wife beater? An unfaithful wife or a wife who constantly lies and steals? A miserable home caused by unfaithfulness or a miserable home caused by incompatibility? A home broken by adultery or a home broken by insanity?<sup>2</sup> Should the insistence upon legal formalities rule out mercy for sinful people?

The entire question of divorce seems to call for greater realism in looking at individual persons and the concrete situation in which they find themselves. J. Harrington confirms that:

It calls for an awareness of the greatest "realism" of all—a reality far surpassing the ideal of irrevocable unity in marriage. And this is the real love which Jesus Himself has for each of us. He understands our humanness, and He desires to give us the freedom in which to share His love. He is the truth that sets us free, in Him rests the ultimate union of two in one flesh.<sup>3</sup>

Koiner confirms that Jesus admitted that a particular provision has been designed by God in His mercy for the limitation of

<sup>1</sup>E. G. White comments: "God will pardon the most guilty, if repentant. I am fully convinced that Brother W. should be given encouragement to stand forth in the strength of the Lord as an overcomer. I see no reason why he should be hounded to death by his fellow men, when the Lord says, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool.' I see no reason why he should not be encouraged to be a worker in the Lord's vineyard. The cleansing of the soul from sin includes the gift of forgiveness, justification, and sanctification. God's mercy to those who sincerely repent and come to Him through Christ, knows no limit. He will pardon the most guilty and purify the most polluted." (Letter P-41, 18 March 1902)

<sup>2</sup>Ellen White's next oldest sister, Sarah, was married to C. and became the mother of five children. After her death, he married another woman. Shortly after, the measles visited the vicinity, and she had the measles in a severe form. The measles went to her brain and she became insane and had to be taken to the asylum. C. struggled for some time, trying to care for his five children. Then, for their sake, he married again. At various times, individuals where C. lived undertook to secure his exclusion from the church because he had married without separating from his wife because of adultery. When appealed to in regards to this matter, White said, "Let them alone." (Ellen G. White Ms. #448).

<sup>3</sup>Harrington, 39:187.

the circumstances of man's sin. But he affirms that it must not be interpreted as divine approval for sinning.<sup>1</sup>

Some Catholic theologians are beginning to adopt and accept this "other look" at the exceptive clause. The consensus of opinion in contemporary studies, is that while the ideal of unbreakable marriage must always remain, a change in the present position of the Church on divorce is conceivable and necessary. According to Harrington, "It would be both true to scripture and a continuation of the process of re-interpretation, which can be discerned there as having begun in the early church."<sup>2</sup> He says:

The church is called upon to exercise mercy instead of placing impossible burdens on men's shoulders. It must enter the realm of personal values and the circumstances of individual marriages and the persons involved.<sup>3</sup>

The Church of today must assume the responsibility of finding a practical solution to the problem of wrecked marriages. The exceptive clause of Matthew suggests that the Church has the power, not to abrogate the fundamental laws restated by its founder, but to regulate their application, taking personal situations into account.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Woman Caught in Adultery

John 8:1-11 records an incident that emphasized Jesus' real intention to protect people. According to the facts we have, the woman was caught in adultery. Since there were more than two

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<sup>1</sup>Koiner, p. 370.

<sup>2</sup>Harrington, p. 187.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

witnesses, the law demanded that in such a case the guilty party should be stoned to death. But what was Jesus' attitude? He moved beyond the legal interpretation of the law and protected the sinner. It is obvious that Jesus was more concerned about motives than about actions, that is, the motive that undergirded the actions of the Pharisees.

This illustration should help to illuminate Jesus' concern in Matt 19:3-9. His concern was to overcome certain abuses in the world, and in this case, the abuses of women in particular. Christ wanted to show the Pharisees and the rest of Christendom that a woman was not just "another possession" but rather a helpmate, a magnificent product of the Creator's hand. The marriage relationship had been perverted by sin, and Jesus came to restore it to the purity and beauty originally ordained by God.

Today, the Church, as a follower of Jesus Christ, should also set up a system to protect abuses within the society. It, too, at certain times and in given situations, must move beyond the legal interpretation of the law to protect the individuals in its community.

Part II of this paper provides the application of this biblical study. It seeks to investigate (1) the needs and concerns of divorced and separated persons of West Indian churches; (2) the church members' concept of divorce; (3) the church members' attitudes toward the divorced and separated; and (4) the church members' awareness of the feelings of loneliness and rejection that come with divorce and separation.

## PART II

### CHAPTER VI

#### SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES OF WEST

#### INDIAN FAMILIES

In order for one to understand the structure and functions of the West Indian family, it is necessary to examine its demographic and historical heritage. In this chapter the cultural factors which played a significant role in the social structure of the West Indian family are discussed. The historical heritage, migratory patterns, and ethnographic findings are reviewed as well.

#### Historical Heritage of West Indians

The West Indies are a group of islands in the Caribbean Sea, stretching from the north coast of Venezuela to the Southern end of Florida, to the eastern end of the Yucatan Peninsula. The multi-cultural and polyethnic flavor in the West Indies springs from a combination of indigenous Amer-Indian cultures, European influences, and the unique cultural contributions of the Chinese, East Indian, and African people.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Michael V. McKenzie, "Ethnographic Findings on West Indian-American Clients," Journal of Counseling and Development 65 (8, 1986):40.

Although West Indians are multilingual, English and its derivative 'patois' are spoken in all present and former British Colonies. Careful attention to an islander's accent, intonation, speech rhythm, and cliches allows a listener to identify a speaker's island of origin.

The emancipation of West Indians took place earlier than did that of their American counterparts and contributed to the shaping of the Black family. Freed West Indians strove for economic independence so that the men could be the true heads of their families and answer to no authority. Land ownership became associated with an independent income, stable relationships, and marriage.<sup>1</sup>

With their early emancipation, ownership of land and business, and numerical dominance, the West Indians have a strong sense of ethnic identity and identification with their particular island culture. Those migrating to the United States bring this strong sense of ethnic cultural identity with them.

#### Migration of West Indians

The migration of West Indians to the United States dates back to the early nineteenth century. According to Janet Brice, in the 1850s there were only a few hundred West Indians immigrating to the United States each year, but by the end of the century, the number had risen to approximately 1,000 per year.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Janet Brice, "West Indian Families," in Ethnicity and Family Therapy, ed. Monica McGoldrick, John K. Pearce, and Joseph Giordano (New York: Guilford Press, 1982), p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>Brice, p. 124.



In 1968, over 140,000 West Indians immigrated to the United States, but this number dropped significantly because of restrictive immigration laws.<sup>1</sup> Most West Indians have settled in the New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut tristate area, where their population has been estimated at between 400,000 and 1,000,000.<sup>2</sup> Other estimates have placed the West Indian American population in New York City alone at over one million<sup>3</sup> and throughout the United States at 4.5 million.<sup>4</sup> Cities and states with sizable West Indian communities include Atlanta; Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts; Chicago; Denver; Los Angeles; Miami; Minnesota; Philadelphia; Texas; Washington, D.C.; and Washington State.

West Indians journey to the United States in search of educational and business opportunities. The value they place on education and upward mobility and a strong work ethic have inculcated in them a strong sense of ethnic and cultural pride.

#### Ethnographic Findings

At the time of migration, usually one family member migrated to the United States and became established. Brice says that generally it was easier for women than men to secure employment in the

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<sup>1</sup>S. M. James, "When Your Patient Is Black West Indian," American Journal of Nursing (11, 1978):1908-1909.

<sup>2</sup>J. McAllister, "TV Documentary to Focus on West Indians," in The New York Daily News (Oct 30, 1983), p. K-8.

<sup>3</sup>G. Trebay, "Parade: Labor Day Carnival," in The Village Voice (Sept, 4, 1984), p. 66.

<sup>4</sup>T. Noel, "Pastors' Calypso Report Irks Caribs," in New York Amsterdam News (3,1986), p. 3.

United States; hence, many more women came over by themselves.<sup>1</sup> The disadvantage of this pattern of migration was the bearing it had on the family structure in addition to the longing for spouses, parents, relatives, or children who had been left behind.

West Indians, like other ethnic groups, have faced and still face the problems of adjusting to a new environment. The weather in the United States changes seasonally and can be cold and brutal compared to the warm tropical temperatures of the islands. One subject<sup>2</sup> said when interviewed, "The weather dictates what people do and when they do it," which, he admitted, can be very disconcerting for a people accustomed to tropical temperatures all year around.

Although jobs are available, many times a skilled West Indian immigrant must take work that does not utilize his or her training.<sup>3</sup> This, however, is usually only temporary because the typical West Indian is not satisfied with mediocrity.

In his book The Impact of the Future, Lyle Schaller says, "One of the most significant facets in the growth of the middle class is the sharp rise in the number of Negroes who have moved into the middle class."<sup>4</sup> Michael McKenzie did a comparative study between British West Indians and American blacks which determined the percentage of West Indians in the growing number of middle-class negroes.<sup>5</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup>Brice, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup>One of the subjects interviewed for this study.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Lyle E. Schaller, The Impact of the Future (New York: Abington Press, 1969), p. 120.

<sup>5</sup>McKenzie, 65:40.

project, however, is not concerned with such comparative statistics except to say that a high percentage of the growing middle-class negroes in America are West Indians.<sup>1</sup>

In the West Indies, blatant and categorical racism that depersonalizes and dehumanizes human beings does not exist. The injurious consequences produced by fear, segregation, negative stereotypes, racially motivated hate and violence, and prejudicial denial of equal opportunity are experienced minimally. When West Indians immigrate to the United States, they seek to escape the most pernicious effects of racism by residing in cities in which racist attitudes are somewhat subdued.<sup>2</sup>

#### Social Changes Affecting Traditional Roles

The traditional adult female role in the West Indies has been that of mother and housewife. As a mother, the female not only bears the children, but also bears the major part of the task of rearing them. She was to instill in them the values the family considered important, to concern herself with their emotional needs, and to attend to their daily physical needs.<sup>3</sup>

As the traditional wife, she was expected to be affectionate toward her husband and sexually accessible to him. She was expected to contribute information and her own opinions to the decision-making process in the family, but often the final authority resided with her

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>McKenzie, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup>Peter Dejong and Donald R. Wilson, Husband and Wife (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1979), pp. 12-13.

husband.<sup>1</sup> The traditional wife was expected to accept a dependent social and economic status.

The traditional adult West Indian male role has been that of provider and husband. As a provider he was to earn a living for his family. This generally meant finding a job, doing it well, and making provision for the family's economic security in the event of his death.<sup>2</sup> His obligations as a husband included being affectionate toward his wife and sexually accessible to her; he was also the acknowledged head of the family.<sup>3</sup>

West Indians who immigrated to the United States were plunged into a more industrial, technological, and nuclear society. Upon their arrival they found that these traditional male and female roles were drastically altered, and most of the time they found it difficult to make the necessary adjustments in their personal role expectations.<sup>4</sup>

Technological and social changes have accelerated tremendously during the last century; and these have caused notable alterations in sex roles, particularly for females.<sup>5</sup> For example, home appliances and mechanical devices have simplified household tasks, thus giving

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>McKenzie, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Dejong and Wilson, p. 12-13.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

women more leisure time. Women can devote more time to other pursuits, if they choose.<sup>1</sup>

An examination of how Americans spend their time revealed trends that showed how social changes affected traditional roles. For example:

1. As a result of opportunities to increase his/her income, in 1967 the average employed American worked five and one-half days or forty-six hours a week.<sup>2</sup>

2. Approximately 3.6 million persons with full-time employment also had a second job, an increase of 20 percent since 1960.<sup>3</sup>

3. There were over 17 million wives employed outside the home, compared to 9 million in 1950 and 5 million in 1940.<sup>4</sup>

4. In 1940, only 9 percent of mothers with children were employed outside the home; by 1965 the figure had jumped to 35 percent.<sup>5</sup>

What has happened, according to Schaller, is that Americans have had the opportunity for an increase in their leisure time, but have rejected this in favor of an increase in income.<sup>6</sup>

The reverse is true for West Indians living in the West Indies. However, when thrust into the American society, they are

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Schaller, The Impact of the Future, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

forced to adjust to the American lifestyle, hence traditional roles are negatively affected. According to Schaller:

The larger income often is not necessary for personal security. In fact, it frequently is used largely to increase the worker's capacity to purchase luxuries [sic]. Is this choice a result of society's mores, which make hard work, a large income, and an increase in material prosperity an object of esteem?<sup>1</sup>

Closely related to this question are the social implications for West Indians who have accepted the increase in income and the decrease in leisure. Traditional role expectations are affected which often impacted negatively on the family structure.

Research shows that employed wives tend to have more decision-making authority in the family than non-employed wives.<sup>2</sup> That is to say their families tend to be less patriarchal and more egalitarian. Employed mothers share more household tasks with husbands and children than their non-employed counterparts. Also, there has been an increased transfer of the early child-rearing responsibilities from the family to day-care centers and nurseries.<sup>3</sup>

While these social changes might fit American culture well, they did have a negative effect on the traditional roles of West Indians immigrating to the United States; often the family was left in disrepair before positive adjustments to those changes were made.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Dejong and Wilson, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Attitudinal Barriers to Utilization  
of Services

Peter Thompson conducted a study to explore West Indians' knowledge of community services, their utilization of those services, and their predisposition to use the services if they were available.<sup>1</sup> The study dealt in part with these issues:

1. Knowledge of community social welfare services (see table 1).
2. Utilization of known services (see table 2)

Thompson points out that according to table 1 the community social services which were best known to the sample population were Adult Protective Services (51 percent), Day Care Services (55 percent), Youth Services (62 percent), Health Services (71 percent), and Educational Services (75 percent). According to Thompson, these five services stand out and can be said to be traditional social welfare services for the immigrants.<sup>2</sup> He explains that the data in table 2 support the fact that these five services were the most used of all the others. The projected utilization of these services is seen in table 3.

Thompson believes that table 3 conveys several important findings, one of which is the combined affirmative responses to the question, How often would you use these services if they were available in your community? The answer ranged from 23 percent to 34 percent. This, he says, points up a definite lack of enthusiasm for

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Thompson, "The Utilization of Social Welfare Services by English Caribbean Residents in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York City" (M.A. thesis, Fordham University, 1973), p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

TABLE 1  
KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNITY SOCIAL  
WELFARE SERVICES

Services	Yes		No		Unsure		No Response	
		%		%		%		%
Home Management	6	11	4	7	29	53	16	25
Homemaker	11	20	4	7	29	53	11	20
Consumer Education	12	22	3	5	24	44	16	29
Counseling	14	25	3	5	24	44	14	25
Child Protective	15	27	5	9	24	44	11	20
Manpower	19	35	5	9	18	33	13	24
Adult Protective	28	51	2	4	17	31	8	15
Day Care	30	55	3	5	13	24	9	16
Youth	34	62	1	2	12	22	8	15
Health	39	71	2	4	6	11	8	15
Educational	41	75	2	4	5	9	7	13

SOURCE: Thompson, "Utilization of Social Welfare Services," p. 43.



TABLE 2  
UTILIZATION OF KNOWN SERVICES

Services	Often	%	Sometimes	%	Never	%	No Response	%
Home Management	0	0	2	4	29	53	24	44
Consumer Education	0	0	3	5	30	55	22	40
Homemaker	2	4	2	4	31	56	20	36
Counseling	2	4	3	5	29	53	21	38
Child Protective	3	5	1	2	29	53	22	40
Manpower	3	5	2	4	29	53	21	38
Adult Protective	3	5	3	5	28	51	21	38
Youth	4	7	5	9	27	49	19	35
Day Care	5	9	2	4	29	53	19	35
Health	11	20	11	20	22	40	11	20
Educational	14	25	5	9	19	35	17	31

SOURCE: Thompson, "Utilization of Social Welfare Services," p. 43.

TABLE 3

PROJECTED UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL  
WELFARE SERVICES

Services	Often	%	Sometimes	%	Never	%	No Response	%
Home Management	1	2	12	22	13	24	29	53
Health	2	4	13	24	7	13	33	60
Adult Protective	3	5	13	24	9	16	30	55
Counseling	4	7	10	18	11	20	30	55
Child Protective	4	7	10	18	12	22	29	53
Youth	5	9	10	18	10	18	30	55
Homemaker	5	9	11	20	10	18	29	53
Manpower	5	9	14	25	10	18	26	49
Day Care	6	11	9	16	8	15	32	58
Educational	7	13	10	18	7	13	31	56
Consumer Ed.	8	15	10	18	10	18	27	50

SOURCE: Thompson, "Utilization of Social Welfare Services," p. 43.

the utilization of services. This trend was strengthened by the very high rate of "No Response"—a range of 49 percent to 60 percent.

Table 4 reveals the services that are more germane to this paper. The data in this table show that a large number of the subjects were adverse to professional counseling; hence they preferred to have marital counseling informally from relatives, friends, and fellow West Indians than from professional counselors.

Brice acknowledges that West Indians are very proud and strong people who believe in handling their own problems. Pain is endured without much evidence of suffering. When the endurance level has been reached, an individual confers with other family members, usually

TABLE 4

ATTITUDES TOWARD COUNSELING  
SERVICES

Services	For	%	Against	%	Unsure	%
Marital Counseling	27	49	9	16	12	22
Family Counseling	21	38	16	29	7	13
Counsel by Immigrants Only	20	36	15	27	16	29
Informal Counseling Only	28	51	18	33	3	5

SOURCE: Thompson, "Utilization of Social Welfare Services," p. 43.

elders.<sup>1</sup> She says "if a person outside of the family is consulted it will probably be the local pastor."<sup>2</sup>

The West Indian family finds it difficult to admit that there is a problem it cannot handle.<sup>3</sup> If a family goes to a mental health professional, it often does so for a child's problem, which may come from a school or a medical complaint, such as from a physician who was unable to find a physiological basis for the child's symptoms.<sup>4</sup>

The conclusions to be drawn from this chapter are: (1) West Indians migrate in abundance to the United States primarily for educational and economic opportunities; (2) Usually one member of the family migrates first; (3) The traditional roles of West Indians are affected by the social changes in America; and (4) Most West Indians

<sup>1</sup>Brice, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

are adverse to counseling services. These factors, it can be concluded, adversely affect the West Indian family structure, which consequently affects their marriages in a negative way.

## CHAPTER VII

### CRISIS EVENTS, CAUSE AND CONCERN OF DIVORCED OR SEPARATED WEST INDIANS

#### Characteristics of Divorced or Separated

Divorce is a grief process. Nancy Potts says, "The grief that accompanies a divorce is similar to the grief process of one who's lost a mate through death."<sup>1</sup> The difference, she says, is that in a divorce, the corpse is still walking around.<sup>2</sup>

Separation, on the other hand, may be one of the stages of singleness which is difficult to describe or even to understand. The person who is separated is, in many ways, caught between two worlds. While still being legally married, the person may be emotionally divorced, or the person may be separated, but still emotionally carrying the scars or hurts from that separation.

Writes Raymond Brown, "Such a state of ambivalence expresses itself in a variety of ways for the separated person."<sup>3</sup> For example, he or she may be caught in vacillating emotions about marriage and divorce. There may be questions of whether or not there is still a

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<sup>1</sup>Nancy Potts, Counseling with Single Adults (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1978), p. 100.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Raymond K. Brown, Reach Out to Singles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), p. 76.

chance to save the marriage.<sup>1</sup> In the present study, this was found to be true, especially among the majority of separated persons interviewed.

It is important to point out that the external composure of each party does not necessarily reveal how each is feeling inside. Potts thinks that it is not uncommon for one person to appear devastated while the other one appears to cope very well, regardless of the circumstances surrounding the divorce.<sup>2</sup> In the present study, many reasons for this were found, such as that one or both spouses could have done much of their grieving while still in the relationship, or sometimes the one who initiates the divorce shows less remorse than the other person.

This section is not designed to deal with "rightness" or "wrongness," nor does it attempt to select "guilty" or "innocent" spouses. Rather, it explores the characteristics of the divorced or separated and offers a way to understand what occurs in the divorce process.

The divorced are people like John<sup>3</sup> who still wants to continue the Gospel ministry, but cannot because there is no road leading to forgiveness and restoration. Kenneth Kantzer writes, "I know of fallen leaders who long to return to the kind of ministry they

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Potts, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup>All names used in examples are pseudonyms; this example was one of the divorced subjects in the study.

previously enjoyed, but no evangelical congregation will accept them."<sup>1</sup>

The divorced are like one woman in her early fifties who was interviewed for this study. She said at first that she did not want to talk about it, but later opened up her heart. She wept several times during the interview as she recalled the rejection she received from her church after her divorce was completed. She said, "No one seemed to understand the pain, the hurt, the feelings of helplessness and hopelessness."

The separated are like Beth<sup>2</sup> who came to the United States to find work in an effort to help with the financial needs of her family. Soon after, her husband became unfaithful and has since left the home.

The separated are people like Mary and Tim<sup>3</sup> whose separation came after their last daughter left for college. Like so many others, Mary had been raised believing that the most important thing good married people did was to be good parents. Neither her church nor her parents had helped her understand that married people are primarily friends, lovers, and companions to each other. Like so many other spouses, Mary and Tim had been so busy trying to be good parents that they failed to work on their own relationship. With their family gone, they were two strangers living in the same house. They had not taken time for each other; they had not learned how to invest in the growth of their own relationship.

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth S. Kantzer, "The Road to Restoration," Christianity Today, November 20, 1987, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>A subject in this study.

<sup>3</sup>Additional subjects from the present study.

The divorced and separated are sons and daughters of stable families, families in which not only parents and siblings but other relatives find it difficult to accept and understand the estrangement that takes place. Paula Ripple recalls:

I think of a woman who called me several years ago. She told me that she had lived all her life with certain attitudes towards divorced people. She had believed most of the things that people believe who have never known of the pain and self-destruction related to divorce. Now her 26-year-old daughter was in the process of separation. She said, "It's changing all the things I once thought about the divorced. I know my daughter is a good girl. I know she worked hard to make a go of that marriage. I know that she is faithful. I also know that for her to continue to try and make that marriage work by herself was destroying her. I admired her for doing the difficult thing". . .<sup>1</sup>

Every story is unique. Every story is a reminder that we are human beings who live in our own human darkness and must walk in the ways and sunshine of Jesus. Every story speaks of the pain of the human journey, a journey that can bring each person new life and a deeper sense of the presence of God.

#### Number of Divorced and Separated

The fact that there are rapid changes in divorce and separation rates means that there are some limitations in the reporting of both vital and census statistics. These rates also depend on which statistic is being used. According to Grunlan, there are at least four types of divorce statistics.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Paula Ripple, The Pain and the Possibility (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1978), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Stephen A. Grunlan, Marriage and the Family (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1984), p. 220.



The first is the "number of divorces per year" (see table 5).<sup>1</sup> Grunlan says that this figure does not really tell us much because it does not take into account increases or decreases in either the general population or the married population. The second is the 'ratio of marriages to divorces per year' (see table 5). This statistic, he thinks, is also unreliable because it compares marriages taking place in one year with divorces from marriages that took place over many years.<sup>2</sup> He contends that if the number of marriages in a given year decreases, the divorce rate appears to rise, even if the number of divorces decreases at a slower rate or remains stable.

TABLE 5  
MARRIAGES, DIVORCES, AND THE RATIO  
BETWEEN THEM IN THE UNITED STATES

Year	Number of Marriages	Number of Divorces	Marriage/Divorce Ratio
1900	709,000	55,751	12.7/1
1910	948,166	83,045	11.4/1
1920	1,274,476	170,505	7.5/1
1930	1,126,856	195,961	5.8/1
1940	1,595,879	264,000	6.0/1
1950	1,667,231	385,144	4.3/1
1960	1,153,000	393,000	3.9/1
1970	2,158,802	708,000	3.0/1
1980	2,413,000	1,182,000	2.0/1

SOURCE: Grunlan, Marriage and the Family, p. 320.

<sup>1</sup>National Center for Health Statistics, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>2</sup>Grunlan, p. 320.

A more accurate measure, he says, is the "crude divorce rate" (see table 6).<sup>1</sup> This is the number of divorces per one thousand persons in the population that year.<sup>2</sup> However, while this rate does take into account increases and decreases in the general population, it does not take into account age changes in a population.

TABLE 6  
CRUDE AND REFINED DIVORCE RATES  
IN THE UNITED STATES

Year	Crude Divorce Rate	Refined Divorce Rate
1920	1.6	7.0
1930	1.6	7.5
1940	2.0	8.5
1950	2.6	9.8
1960	2.2	9.2
1970	3.5	15.0
1980	5.3	23.5

SOURCE: Grunlan, Marriage and the Family, p. 320.

A good example would be an aging population; this population would have a greater percentage of its population married each year. Therefore, even if the percentage of marriages ending in divorce remains constant, the crude divorce rate would rise.

The most accurate and useful measure of divorce, says Grunlan, is the "refined divorce rate" (see table 6). This is the number of

<sup>1</sup>National Center for Health Statistics, U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Crude Rates.

<sup>2</sup>Grunlan, p. 320.

divorces a year per one thousand married women over age fifteen. It is the most valid statistic on divorce because it measures divorces by the number of women eligible for divorce.<sup>1</sup>

This measure allows an accurate comparison of divorce rates from one year to another without having to be concerned about age, size of population, or marital changes in the population.<sup>2</sup> One general problem with all of these measures is that they do not distinguish between first, second, and more divorces. That is, a few people having several divorces each would produce the same rates as many people having one divorce each.

#### Grounds for Divorce and Separation

In New York City there are four different categories of court judgments relating to marriage; these are (1) Divorce: the termination of the marriage relation and the marriage contract by direction of a court; (2) Annulment: the invalidation of a marriage; that is, a court declaration that the marriage never existed; (3) Legal Separation: a court determination that the marriage still exists, but that the parties are directed to live apart; and (4) Dissolution: the special case of marriages terminated on the ground that one party has been absent for more than five years without explanation, and the presumption that the party is dead.

In New York, as well as in every state, the party asking for a divorce must show good reason for his or her request. However, the

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<sup>1</sup>Grunlan, p. 321.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

quality and quantity of the proof required varies from state to state. Divorce can be classified as either "fault divorce" or "no-fault divorce." A "no-fault" divorce," says Howard Bass, is known as "irreconcilable differences," "irretrievable breakdown," or "incompatibility."<sup>1</sup> Each state has its own standard for the requirements needed to establish irreconcilable differences, incompatibility, or breakdown. New York State, according to Bass, requires that the parties live apart for more than one year under the terms of a written agreement, acknowledged before a notary, and filed with the court.<sup>2</sup>

"Fault divorce," on the other hand, has a wider range of grounds and that, too, differs considerably from state to state.

#### Adultery as Grounds for Divorce

Adultery is voluntary sexual intercourse between one party in a marriage and anyone other than the lawful spouse. The definition of sexual intercourse has been broadened in many states to include "deviate sexual intercourse," which is further defined in the divorce law or in the criminal code of the state.

#### Abandonment as Grounds for Divorce

Abandonment has three elements: simple leaving, leaving with intent not to return, and leaving without the consent of the other

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<sup>1</sup>Howard L. Bass, Divorce or Marriage: A Legal Guide (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1976), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

party.<sup>1</sup> In the state of New York, abandonment for a period of one year is considered grounds for divorce.<sup>2</sup>

### Cruelty as Grounds for Divorce

Cruelty may be physical or mental; it may be by blows or it may be verbal; it may be a course of conduct or a course of nonconduct.<sup>3</sup> The following are examples of cruel and inhuman conduct sufficient for granting a divorce:

1. Shooting and wounding a spouse
2. Shooting at but not wounding a spouse
3. Hitting, slapping, kicking on numerous occasions
4. Insisting on having "unnatural" sexual relations
5. Insisting that a third party live with the couple
6. Refusing to allow a third party to live with the couple<sup>4</sup>

In New York State, cruelty is recognized as a valid ground for divorce or separation.<sup>5</sup>

### Drug Use and Habitual Intoxication as Grounds for Divorce

About half of the states consider drug use and habitual intoxication grounds for divorce as separate categories, the other

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<sup>1</sup>Bass, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Cassidy, What Every Man Should Know about Divorce (Washington, DC: New Republic Books, 1977), p. 220.

<sup>3</sup>Bass, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup>Bass, p. 30.

<sup>5</sup>Grunlan, p. 323.

states classify them as forms of cruelty.<sup>1</sup> Accusations of drug abuse and drunkenness are very often linked with physical abuse. However, some states accept a charge that the defendant is a habitual drunkard, or a drug addict, and has been for a period of years.<sup>2</sup>

#### Imprisonment as Grounds for Divorce

In many states, by statute the confinement of the defendant in prison for a period of years is a ground for judgment of divorce.<sup>3</sup> The confinement must be after the marriage; however, if the spouse was convicted before the marriage and was not confined until after the marriage and if the conviction was concealed from the other spouse there would be grounds for an annulment.<sup>4</sup> Imprisonment of a spouse for three consecutive years after marriage in the state of New York is sufficient grounds for divorce.<sup>5</sup>

#### Non-Support as Grounds for Divorce

Failure to support is regarded in some states as something less than the other grounds for divorce. In New York, it is grounds for separation and, possibly, grounds for an annulment, but it is not considered grounds for divorce.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bass, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Bass, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Grunlan, p.323.

### Insanity as Grounds for Divorce

Insanity must be "legal insanity"; that is, the spouse must have been found insane by a court and usually must have been and still be confined to a mental institution. New York State terminates a marriage on the insanity ground by a judgment of "dissolution" of the marriage,<sup>1</sup> which for practical purposes is the same as a divorce.

### Fraud as Grounds for Divorce

Fraud requires reliance by the plaintiff on a false statement made by the defendant which the defendant knew was false.<sup>2</sup> The statement, says Bass, must be a marital one such that if the plaintiff knew the truth, he or she would not have entered into the marriage.<sup>3</sup> Fraud may also result from concealment of a material fact where there is a duty to speak out.<sup>4</sup>

These grounds are the justification which states in general require before granting a legal divorce. It should be kept in mind that the quality of the proof of the acts varies considerably from state to state and from judge to judge. New York State was emphasized because it is the state in which the research was conducted.

### Grounds for Divorce and Separation among West Indian Seventh-day Adventists

It has been shown that grounds for divorce vary from state to state; this makes divorce a more complicated issue. The subjects

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<sup>1</sup>Bass, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

interviewed reflected the same diversity of grounds given for their divorce or separation, which would seem to suggest that the challenge of the church in this area is great. Figure 3 shows the grounds for divorce or separation given by the subjects.

Figure 3 shows that twenty persons (32%) obtained their divorce or separation on the ground of adultery. At the same time, 41 persons (67%) obtained their divorce on other grounds. What is significant here is that the majority of the subjects were divorced or separated on grounds other than adultery. This seems to be a great departure from the biblical mandate in Matt 5:32 and 19:9.

The common practice among West Indian families for one spouse to migrate, primarily for higher education or economic opportunities, does have a negative impact on the marriage. This study has shown that fourteen of the subjects (22%) either obtained a divorce or a separation as a result of these circumstances. Seven persons were reluctant to give the cause of their divorce or separation during the interview; hence the caption "other grounds." They did admit that it was not for any of the reasons given in figure 3.



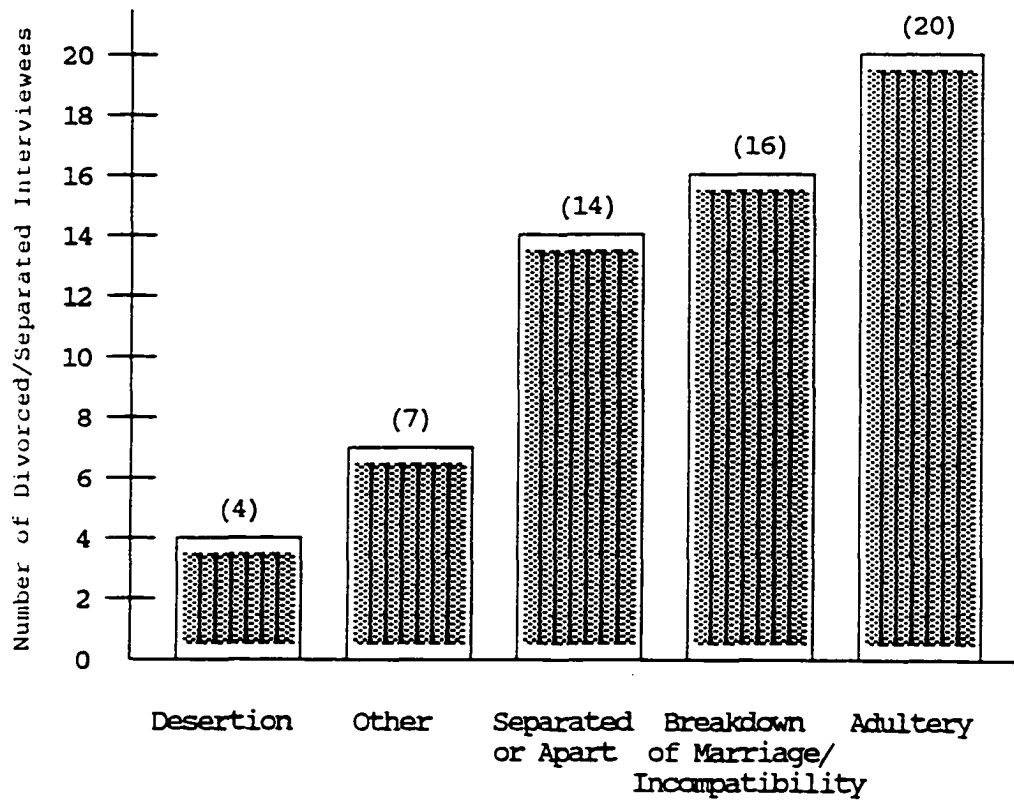


Figure 3. Grounds for Divorce and Separation among West Indian Seventh-day Adventists.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DIVORCE AND SEPARATION AS A STRESSFUL LIFE EVENT

Feelings of pain, anger, rejection, self-pity, depression, failure, guilt, conflict with religious convictions, and abandonment were frequently expressed by the divorced and separated. Such feelings stimulate negative emotions. Bustanoby thinks that one provokes another; that is, rejection provokes anger and self-pity. Abandonment raises fear. Grief, guilt, and self-pity go round and round in an exhausting whirlpool of emotion, stirring up old feelings of anger.<sup>1</sup>

During an interview, one person contended that it was difficult to sort out these emotions; they came at times when the pressure of life was most stressful. Jacobson calls these "pressures of life," "stressful life events." He believes that sufficiently severe life events can cause lasting psychological changes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>André Bustanoby, But I Didn't Want a Divorce (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1975), p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>Gerald F. Jacobson, The Multiple Crisis of Marital Separation and Divorce (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1983), p. 8.

Divorce and Separation:  
Psychological Concerns

Studies regarding the association of life events and psychological illness have been undertaken by several groups of researchers. Virtually all have taken the approach that a series of life events occurring over a period of time are related to subsequent physical or psychological illness.<sup>1</sup> The rationale is that one event, unless catastrophic, would not be sufficiently potent to affect the individual physically or psychologically over a short period of time; but a cluster of such events would have such an effect.<sup>2</sup> Such a cluster of events commonly occur around marital separation and divorce.

Persons who are divorced or separated have been repeatedly found to be highly represented among psychiatric patients, while persons who are married and living with their spouses have been found to be represented in lesser proportions.<sup>3</sup> Admission rates into psychiatric facilities are lowest among the married, intermediate among widowed and never-married adults, and highest among the divorced and separated.<sup>4</sup> This differential appears to be stable across different cohorts, reasonably stable for each sex considered separately, and as true for blacks as for whites.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jacobson, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>George Levinger and Oliver Moles, eds., Divorce and Separation (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 185.

<sup>4</sup>Levinger and Moles, p. 185.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

The Social Readjustment Rating Scale, which is composed of 43 life events, gives each event a numerical weight to indicate its intensity and the length of time necessary for its accommodation regardless of its desirability.<sup>1</sup> Holmes and Rahe believe that a dividing line of 150 Life Change Units (LCU), occurring within six months, exists between persons who tend to become ill and those who do not.<sup>2</sup> A major life crisis is defined as a total of 300 or more LCUs.<sup>3</sup> It is of interest to this researcher to note the life events and corresponding LCUs that a person undergoing divorce or separation might experience within six months as shown in table 7.<sup>4</sup>

A person who was separated and then divorced within a six-month period accumulated a score of 138 for these events. It was likely that other events, such as change in financial state, change in number of arguments with spouse, change in living and working conditions, and change in social activities also had occurred so that the total score would be much higher. The total LCUs of the events listed above is 521. While few, if any, persons would have a score of that magnitude, it is clear that divorce and separation are associated with very high LCU levels.

Levinger and Oliver provide two tables (see tables 8 and 9) that show the admission rates per 100,000 population into outpatient

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<sup>1</sup>Life Crisis and Health Change, quoted in Gerald F. Jacobson, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Jacobson, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>T. H. Holmes and R. H. Rahe, "Social Readjustment Rating Scale," Journal of Psychosomatic Research, (1967):30.

<sup>4</sup>Table developed by Holmes and Rahe.

TABLE 7

LIFE EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF DIVORCED  
OR SEPARATED INDIVIDUALS

Rank	Life Event	Life Crisis Units
2	Divorce	73
3	Marital separation	65
13	Sex difficulties	39
16	Change in financial status	38
18	Change to a different line of work	36
19	Change in number of arguments with spouse	35
24	Trouble with in-laws	29
26	Wife began or stopped working	26
28	Change in living conditions	25
31	Change in work hours or conditions	20
32	Change in residence	20
34	Change in recreation	19
35	Change in church activities	19
36	Change in social activities	18
38	Change in sleeping habits	16
39	Change in number of family get-togethers	15
40	Change in eating habits	15
41	Vacation	13

TABLE 8

ADMISSION RATES PER 100,000 POPULATION INTO  
OUTPATIENT PSYCHIATRIC CLINICS IN THE  
UNITED STATES

Year	Sex	Never Married	Marital Status <sup>1</sup>			
			Married	Separated/Divorced	Widowed	
1961	Male	208.1	83.1	449.5	284.2	54.3
	Female	182.6	95.6	430.3	295.1	54.0
1969	Male	770.9	374.2	1884.4		757.7
	Female	764.6	344.6	1701.0		945.4
1970	Male	806.3	276.0	2653.8	1365.6	310.9
	Female	743.0	423.2	2834.5	1621.7	286.3

TABLE 9

ADMISSION RATES PER 100,000 POPULATION  
INTO PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PSYCHIATRIC  
HOSPITALS IN THE UNITED STATES

Year	Type of Hospital	Sex	Never Married	Marital Status <sup>2</sup>			
				Married	Separated/Divorced	Widowed	
1969	Public	Male	757.6	169.8	2012.6		1046.9
		Female	398.8	119.4	712.3		359.3
1970	Public	Male	438.8	132.6	2975.9	2167.6	629.6
		Female	242.1	124.8	1065.5	758.6	249.2
1970- 1971	Private	Male	927.4	271.8	1904.9		416.1
		Female	524.6	300.8	907.6		543.1
1975	Public	Male	501.1	122.1	1712.4		355.6
		Female	216.8	81.7	595.1		152.6

<sup>1</sup>The year 1969 shows a combined figure for the divorced/separated.

<sup>2</sup>Years 1969, 1970-71, and 1975 show a combined figure for the divorced/separated.

psychiatric and public or private psychiatric hospitals in the United States by year, marital status, and sex.<sup>1</sup> These two tables support the fact that divorce and separation as stressful life events caused lasting psychological changes.

It was difficult to assess the psychological effect of divorce and separation on the subjects,<sup>2</sup> since only five (8%) said that they had gone for professional help during or after their divorce or separation. Also, many were reluctant to say whether or not they think their divorce or separation affected them psychologically.

Divorce and Separation:  
Social Concerns

Among those interviewed for this research it was discovered that the social structure in which partners lived or that which they created for themselves gave rise to external forces which encouraged them to remain married. Such forces include the individual costs of breaking a social and legal commitment, as well as the emotional cost to others for which an individual feels responsible. The church, obligations toward children, legal barriers, and the disapproval of family and friends are examples of forces, aside from the marital relationship itself, that keep the marriage intact. External forces help bind the partners together in marriage and make escape from marriage more troublesome. On the other hand, when the marriage relation has been reduced to a serious level of deterioration and

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<sup>1</sup>Levinger and Oliver, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup>Those involved in the present study.

separation or divorce becomes inevitable, these same external forces provide a nagging social concern for the divorced or separated.

For many people, says Raymond Brown, divorce marks the first time they have ever really been single. This new experience of finding oneself single for the first time can be devastating.<sup>1</sup>

Divorcing or separated persons need a supportive group of people to help them in human and practical ways. According to Brown:

That help may come by having someone who will listen without judging or condemning. It may come from someone who had gone through a similar trauma. It may come from a person knowledgeable in community resources, who can indicate where help can be obtained when help is needed.<sup>2</sup>

Based on a study done by Graham Spanier and Linda Thompson, it is believed that a vast majority of divorced and separated spouses received moral support from their parents, brothers, and sisters since their divorce or separation. However, in the interviews with the subjects in this study it was discovered that the majority of them did not get this kind of support from their relatives. The reason for this was that they were away from most of those to whom they feel close.

One of the strong social concerns those divorced and separated persons expressed was the impact the divorce or separation had on the children. Of the subjects in this study, 75 percent said that their divorce or separation affected their children emotionally and 60

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<sup>1</sup>Raymond K. Brown, Reach Out to Singles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), p. 90.

<sup>2</sup>Graham Spanier and Linda Thompson, Parting (Beverly Hills, London: Sage Publications, 1984), p. 173.



percent said that their children had problems with social relationships.

The effects of the absence of the father from the home seems to do great harm to the growing child. The following conclusions were drawn, based upon psychological studies done by Levinger and Moles: father-absent boys (1) show inappropriate sex-role behaviors, (2) have a less adequate sex-role identification, (3) have a lower level of moral development. In addition, father-absent girls (4) behave inappropriately in their heterosexual relationships, and boys and girls from father-absent homes (5) have lower academic performance.<sup>1</sup>

In this study, those who had children admitted that the pain and the hurt of their divorce/separation was intensified because they were conscious of the fact that their children were hurting, too. Many claimed that this hurt was manifested in their children's behavioral patterns from preschool to adolescence.

Cassidy confirms these behavioral patterns in children. Preschoolers, he says, showed changes in behavior at the time of the divorce. For example, they regressed in toilet training, whined, cried, were fearful, had trouble sleeping, sucked their thumbs, and threw tantrums.<sup>2</sup>

Among school-age children, the younger ones show tremendous sadness about the divorce, and Cassidy thinks that it is difficult for them to find a way to relieve their suffering. Older school-age children seem to have a unique two-level response to divorce. While

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<sup>1</sup>Levinger and Moles, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup>Cassidy, p. 45.

on the surface they may be trying to cope bravely, almost as if nothing had happened, underneath they were deeply torn and extremely angry.<sup>1</sup>

Adolescents, he states, were deeply hurt by the divorce and found it extremely painful even though they did not feel responsible for the breakup. They also had concerns peculiar to their age group, such as doubting whether they would ever get married.<sup>2</sup>

Divorce with coparental custody,<sup>3</sup> contends Paul Bohannon, brings the most enduring pain. This is especially true if the ex-spouses differed greatly in their expectations and goals for their children morally, spiritually, professionally, and physically.<sup>4</sup>

There were other social concerns expressed by the subjects in this study, such as (1) being afraid to trust people who might become love partners, (2) boredom, (3) the decline of social acceptance among those who are married, and (4) few social activities. It is a frightening experience for many--the sudden loss of companionship makes life devastating for them. "How?" some were asking, and "When will it end?"

#### Divorce and Separation: Emotional Concerns

In her book, When My World Crashed, Sylvia Forrest describes her emotional pain right after her divorce:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 45, 47.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>Both parents share joint legal custody of the child.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Bohannon, ed. Divorce and After (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1970), p. 51-55.

Dusk was drifting down as I unlocked the front door and let myself into the living room of what had been our home. I stood, holding my suitcase, trying to comprehend what had happened. This house in which I was now standing, my home, was to be sold. Where would I go? There were no relatives to take me in. I had lost my own family through recent deaths. Now I had lost both Jim and his family through a divorce. . . . Looking down at the suitcase I had taken to the hospital three weeks ago, I shook my head as if trying to awaken from a bad dream. This had not really happened to me or had it?<sup>1</sup>

Forrest recalled her first night alone after the divorce, "An eerie silence surrounded me. I would be alone all night long."<sup>2</sup> She said that she had been alone in the house before, but those were times when Jim, her husband, was away on business or visiting relatives and she had the assurance he would be back. Tonight was different. Jim would never be back. Not ever!<sup>3</sup>

Forrest, like so many other human beings who have gone through a divorce or separation, experienced this loneliness, and with this loneliness came feelings of rejection. As Bustanoby says, no other trauma damages you as badly as the feeling of rejection caused by divorce. Divorce may leave you believing that there is absolutely nothing redeemable about you.<sup>4</sup>

When rejection and loneliness are put together, they mean double jeopardy, said one subject in the interviews. It is bad enough to be alone, but to be alone and feel rejected—"How do you cope?" she asked. Grollman and Sams captured the feelings of those lonely and rejected hearts when they wrote:

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<sup>1</sup>(Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Ass., 1981), p. 59.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Bustanoby, p. 74.

Nobody wants me.  
Who could love me?

You feel rejected,  
put aside,  
cast off,  
alone, naked, unprotected.

Time drags.  
Days are long.  
Nights are longer.  
You find no pleasure in anything or anyone.

You are useless.  
You are empty  
So is the world around you.<sup>1</sup>

These emotions do not heal with the usual emotional band-aids dispensed by friends. Bohannon says that divorce is an institution that nobody enters without great trepidation. In the emotion of divorce, people are likely to feel hurt and angry.<sup>2</sup>

The subjects who participated in this research study spoke openly about their emotional pain; one spouse declared, "What a fool I have been. I have given up all of my self, and he walks away leaving me with absolutely nothing. I have been used." The tears flowed as she spoke.

Although many of the subjects spoke openly, they expressed different reactions to their emotional pain. Figure 4 shows the reactions which were prominent among them.

Every one of those divorced or separated persons who were interviewed expressed feelings of loneliness. Loneliness implied social solitude and separation, but the source of the loneliness

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<sup>1</sup>Earl A. Grollman and Marjorie L. Sams, Living Through Your Divorce (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>Bohannon, p. 32.

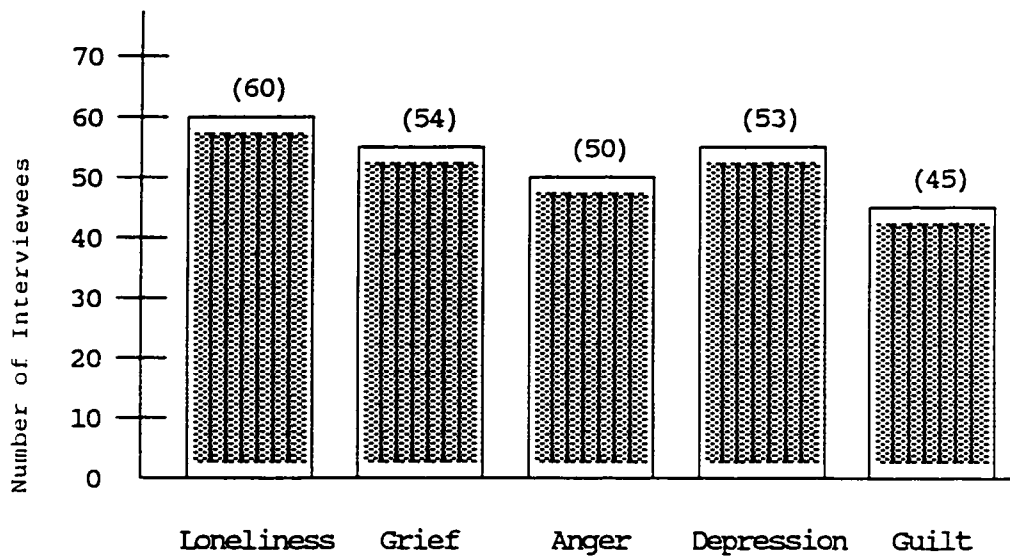


Figure 4. Feelings Associated with Divorce and Separation.

differed considerably among them. For some, their loneliness was intensified by feelings of rejection--rejection by many of their mutual friends. There were others who felt that their friends sometimes looked at them as being unstable now that they were either divorced or separated; this sense increased their feelings of loneliness.

Figure 4 shows that 54 of those interviewed (88%) experienced grief. According to Bustanoby, "Grief is the spontaneous response to the loss of a relationship, and can be the result of abandonment and rejection."<sup>1</sup>

One person remarked, "Losing a partner through divorce or separation produced a reaction of grief similar to that which death produced."

For Grollman and Sams:

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<sup>1</sup>Bustanoby, p. 74.

Divorce is a kind of death; in many ways it is worse. With death there is a funeral, there are flowers, words of sympathy, hugs, talk of happy memories. Friends and families come together, they grieve with the survivor. In divorce, one mourns alone.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the subjects explained that during the period of grief a number of them undertook a search for self. The poem below describes this search for self in part:

Who am I now?  
I used to share my name,  
    my identity.  
What am I?

"I am divorced,  
    Ex-partner,  
        ex-lover,  
            ex-husband,  
                ex-wife.  
I am a half-person  
I can't go on like this."  
Your world is a nightmare.  
You feel lost.<sup>2</sup>

For some, the loss was of a companion, a home, or a town, a job, their church, a club, or a crowd. Whatever the loss, there is that inner consciousness of it, no matter how bad the relationship might have been.

Anger seems to be a very strong feeling among divorced and separated persons. Fifty of those interviewed (81%) admitted feeling angry, either with themselves, their spouse, others, or God. One of them stated, "I am not perfect, but I tried. God knows that I tried. Why me?" Another spoke of wanting revenge. "My life is destroyed," she said, "but I will get even some day."

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<sup>1</sup>Grollman and Sams, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

There seems to be a close similarity between depression and grief; some of the subjects were not able to make a distinction. Figure 4 shows that 53 persons stated that they experienced depression in their divorce or separation and 54 said they experienced grief. The similarity of the two symptoms might have been the factor occasioning the similarity of incidence of the two feelings.

Guilt feelings had the lowest response in Figure 4; 45 (73%) persons said that they felt guilt after the divorce or separation was final. "It was only natural," one man explained, "that I felt a sense of guilt over my divorce. It did not matter who was the guilty party, the fact was we were no longer together."

There are those who believe that it is a common reaction for divorced and separated persons to say, "If only I had been more understanding, forgiving, and accepting. If only I had done this, or not done that, tried harder . . ."<sup>1</sup> These feelings of guilt, says Bustanoby, may or may not be justified.<sup>2</sup>

The conclusion can be drawn that loneliness, grief, anger, depression, and guilt in the lives of the divorced and separated may be contributing factors to the high admission rates for divorced and separated persons into private and public psychiatric hospitals. Also, if West Indians are adverse to professional counseling, then they might need help from somewhere else during their crisis.

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<sup>1</sup>Grollman and Sams, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Bustanoby, p. 77.

Divorce and Separation: Physical  
and Spiritual Concerns

The issue of economic stability in marriage and in the transition from marriage to divorce was recurrent. For most persons interviewed, divorce or separation brought such a great financial strain that they were forced into changing their lifestyle. One person made this remark:

The lack of financial stability is the worst part. It creates all sorts of fears and anxiety. The kids don't understand why. I'm still so messed up. . . . If only I could earn some money, maybe I could relax and pull myself together. Somehow I'm supposed to come out of this a whole human being, but I'm not sure how. . . . The worst part of the divorce has been the job problems and the financial insecurity.<sup>1</sup>

Her desperation revealed a significant discovery of this study, namely, that there are important differences in the economics of divorce with respect to gender.

Of the men interviewed, very few reported major economic problems caused by the divorce. All of them had full-time jobs before the divorce or separation and either continued in that job or obtained another job which paid better.

For the women the opposite was almost always true. Many reported that they were substantially worse off. A number of them had to be working two jobs in order to meet their budget. Women who had custody of their child or children said they found it even more difficult. In terms of economic stability, most of the men stabilized themselves shortly after their divorce or separation. It was discovered that women who were older and had been divorced or

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<sup>1</sup>Spanier and Thompson, pp. 85-86.



separated for a longer period of time showed more economic stability than younger women.

There are those who say that women who have never worked before their divorce or separation or who had only worked part-time, found it more difficult to get a job.<sup>1</sup> However, at the time the interviews were conducted, all the women were working either full or part-time even though a few did not work prior to the divorce.

For most of the female subjects, the economic adjustments of their divorce or separation affected their whole recovery. There were factors built into this problem of economic recovery such as: (1) the high cost of renting an apartment in New York City, (2) the reluctance of landlords to rent homes or apartments to one-income families, (3) the high cost of living in New York City, and (4) the advantages taken of them by service and repair men.

Bohannon maintains that many wives voluntarily give up their rights to property at the time they become ex-wives.<sup>2</sup> This was true of some wives interviewed for this study. However, it was also discovered that wives who had immigrated to the United States and had lived for many years and worked, did not walk away, but rather ensured that the assets would be shared equally.

There seemed to be a close relationship between economic stability and spiritual stability among the subjects. Of those interviewed, 65 percent reported that they were financially stable and claimed that their spirituality was either the same or had grown since

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<sup>1</sup>Spanier and Thompson, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>Bohannon, p. 43.

their divorce or separation. On the other hand, of the 20 percent who reported economic difficulties, the majority said their spirituality had been declining. Some admitted that it was more difficult to return a faithful tithe since their divorce or separation.

The spirituality of the subjects in general seemed to have been influenced by many variables, such as: (1) the relationship they had with the Lord prior to the divorce or separation, (2) the relationship they had with their church, (3) the level of their involvement in the activities of the church, and (4) the kind of reception they got from the members of the Church during and after their divorce or separation.

Some are presently active in their churches while others are sitting quietly, inconspicuously, and oftentimes infrequently, in church. But the most pained of them all are those who are still hurting, hurting from the pain that comes with divorce or separation and hurting from the rejection they received from the members of the household of faith.

The following conversation between Myron Widmer and a college classmate serves to illustrate the point of the last group:

Memories were revived as we talked of mutual college friends, pooling bits and pieces of information to form some kind of current picture. When I mentioned that one no longer attended church, she seemed very surprised. . . . Then slowly, as if she were looking for the right words, she continued, "Well, I should tell you that I am not attending church either." Slowly the story unfolded, a story of feeling hurt by being alienated by her fellow members during her recent divorce, a time when she needed a good helping hand or listening ear.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Myron K. Widmer, "Feelings of Little Attachment," The Adventist Review, Feb. 6, 1986, p. 5.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CHURCH AS A TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY

It is evident from reading the New Testament scripture that the early church was distinctive in the love of its members for one another. Jesus told His followers, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you have love one to the other" (John 13:35). This love was indeed a mark of the early Christian community. There was a beautiful relationship in which the strength of inner Christian love poured forth not just to a few, but, as Paul expressed in his epistle to the Philippians, it was "felt for all" (Phil 2:1-5).

The Church today, as a transforming community, must seek to transfer the theology and practice of the early Church into its own life and teachings. It should demonstrate the same care for one another, for if one member suffers, all the members suffer with him/her; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with her/him (1 Cor 12:24-26). It must seek to put into practice at all times what the writer to the Hebrews says, "Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching" (Heb 10:24-25).

In our concern we must "bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2), but desiring to build one another up in the faith. Paula Ripple thinks that "our mistaken understanding of who God is, is related to our inability to understand what the Church is and what it was meant to be."<sup>1</sup>

### What Is the Church?

To use the words of George Eldon Ladd, "The Church is a fellowship of those who respond to the proclaimed word of God and who believe in Jesus Christ and confess Him as Lord."<sup>2</sup> If this is true, then the Church as a transforming community must be distinctive, in that its fellowship within the community should not only be on the horizontal level, that is, with others, but also on the vertical level, that is, with God.<sup>3</sup> ". . . that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

According to Ripple, we need to remind ourselves often that, as Christians, our call is not to settle into some meaningless image of the Church.<sup>4</sup> A meaningful image, then, should be to see the Church as the New Israel. The Old Israel—that is, Israel according to the

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<sup>1</sup>Ripple, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup>George E. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1981), p. 544.

<sup>3</sup>Kenneth K. Kilinski and Terry C. Wofford, Organization and Leadership in the Local Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1973), p. 135.

<sup>4</sup>Ripple, p. 108.

flesh—was rejected because Gentiles attained unto righteousness and were brought into the true Israel because they sought it by faith.<sup>1</sup>

Here was an outstanding difference between participation in the Old and the New Israel. Membership in the Old Israel required circumcision and acceptance of the Law; membership in the New Israel requires individual personal faith and confession of Christ as Lord.<sup>2</sup>

In his book, A History of Christian Missions, Stephen Neil makes this remark, "The emphasis in the past was on the Church as an administrative organization, as a corporation, rather than on the Church as the divine creation, the body of Christ."<sup>3</sup> If this past emphasis is permitted to continue, then many will be forced to go away from the Church, saddened by their need to look in other places for a vision of life that is adequate.

Ripple contends that the message of the Church about Christ has been so restricted that many seek healing in other religious traditions. They seek healing in humanistic groups that promise no belief in the existence of a God. They look for strength in groups that do not tell of a God whose faithfulness to us is recorded in the story of a people who most of the time in their history were unfaithful to His promise of life.<sup>4</sup> The Church as a transforming community must preserve itself from this failure and seek in every

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<sup>1</sup>Ladd, p. 544.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 545.

<sup>3</sup>(New York: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 511.

<sup>4</sup>Ripple, p. 109.

possible way to be, as Ellen G. White states, "God's appointed agency on earth for the saving of souls."<sup>1</sup>

The Church therefore, as a transforming community, is a dynamic, integrated, complex body of believers bound together in a beautiful fellowship of love, sharing the hardships and trials of the Christian life, supporting and exhorting one another, rejoicing in a relationship of deep devotion and worship for God, holding fast to their common values, and doing all this through the hope and love of Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

What Do the Divorced or Separated  
Want from the Church?

This question was asked of the 61 persons interviewed. With very little exception, they seemed to want the assurance that the love they had for the Church was not questioned. They wanted to be free of the stereotypes that make them marked people in some churches. They wanted to be able to share fully in the community of believers, sharing, as others did, both their gifts and their brokenness. What they wanted from the Church was best summarized as the need for understanding.

The Need for Understanding

Kenneth Peterson, in his article, "Wife Abuse: The Silent Crime, the Silent Church," provides us with the story of a wife who had been battered by her husband for many years. She was a Christian

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Acts of the Apostles (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Ass., 1954), p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Kilinski and Wofford, p. 135.

and held strong convictions concerning the sanctity of marriage. But she could take just so much physical abuse. She went to her pastor for help. She said that she did not believe in divorce, but that her life was in danger. She wanted to move out. Her pastor did not understand that. He told her she had married for better or for worse, that she should go home and pray and work it out, that she should not upset her husband, that to have him arrested or kicked out of the house was morally wrong, that the sanctity of the house is based on accepted religious values, that even if he was kicking her in her pregnant abdomen, her marriage was "a holy state of matrimony" and she should endure her suffering and hold the family together.<sup>1</sup>

The subjects who were interviewed,<sup>2</sup> like the abused wife, were asking everyone to understand their given situation. To understand, that even though their divorce or separation might not have been on the grounds of adultery, it was still a situation of pain and hurt and they needed understanding (see table 10).

#### The Need for Love

Says Sylvia Forrest:

If you are being pulled downstream, fighting to hold your head above water, and a friend runs along the bank and reaches out a strong hand to save you, then you know you have a friend. Not a mere acquaintance . . . [but] A friend who comes at a time of need.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth W. Peterson, "Wife Abuse: The Silent Crime, the Silent Church," Christianity Today, November 25, 1983, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Table 10 shows their perception of the Church's level of understanding toward them.

<sup>3</sup>Forrest, p. 60.

TABLE 10

DIVORCED AND SEPARATED PERSONS' PERCEPTION  
OF THEIR CHURCH'S LEVEL OF  
UNDERSTANDING TOWARD THEM

Question:	Response	
	Yes n	No n
1. Do you feel free to talk about your divorce to the members of your church?	21	40
2. Do you think the ministers you have had in the past were sympathetic to divorced people?	16	45
3. Have you ever listened to a sermon on divorce/separation that you considered redemptive?	3	58
4. Have there been any workshops conducted in your church geared toward divorced/separated people?	0	61
5. Do you think the Church has a biblical concept of Jesus' teaching on divorce?	29	32

The following account by Forrest substantiates her point:

It was Sunday afternoon when the phone rang. "This is Daisy. I didn't see you in church yesterday. Are you well?" "As well as I can be under the circumstances." "What circumstances?" "Didn't you know Jim and I are getting a divorce?" "A divorce? . . . My dear, you need help. I'll be right over."<sup>1</sup>

Here was a typical demonstration of love in action; here was a friend who was unwilling to condemn, but willing to help, to provide love when it was needed most. This was exactly the echo of those divorced

<sup>1</sup>Forrest, p. 60.



and separated persons interviewed. They said, "Don't talk about love. Show it."<sup>1</sup> See table 11.

### The Need for Forgiveness

According to Kantzer, "The Church has always dealt more lightly with converted sinners than with backslidden saints."<sup>2</sup> He argues that it is a known fact that many churches do not allow divorced individuals to serve on their church boards as deacons,

TABLE 11  
DIVORCED AND SEPARATED PERSONS' PERCEPTION  
OF THEIR CHURCH'S LEVEL OF  
LOVE TOWARD THEM

Question:	Response	
	Yes n	No n
1. Have you ever been visited by any of your fellow church members since your divorce/separation?	20	41
2. Did any of them pray with you at home, church, or over the phone?	25	36
3. Were you visited by your pastor?	30	31
4. Did you receive a call from any of your church members?	27	34
5. Are the members as close to you now as they were before the divorce/separation?	17	44

<sup>1</sup>Table 11 shows their perception of the church's level of love toward them.

<sup>2</sup>Kantzer, p.21.

elders, or in other leadership positions. This, Hosier says, is one of the cruelest things being done to divorced people.<sup>1</sup> While one might differ with Hosier's general conclusion, one must admit that the failure of some churches to allow divorced or separated individuals to hold certain positions is in fact a failure to forgive if there was genuine repentance and forsaking of sin.

Those subjects who felt unforgiven by their churches (see table 12) contended that the church should attempt to salvage or redeem lives, rather than treat people in a strict, moralistic, and legalistic manner.

TABLE 12  
DIVORCED AND SEPARATED PERSONS' PERCEPTION  
OF THEIR CHURCH'S LEVEL OF  
FORGIVENESS TOWARD THEM

Question:	Response	
	Yes n	No n
1. Did you ever feel forgiven by your church after your divorce/separation?	21	40
2. Did you feel comfortable during the worship service after your divorce/separation?	20	41
3. Did you stop going to church for a while during or after your divorce/separation?	32	29
4. Do you think the members were supportive enough?	22	39
5. Do you now take active part in the church?	16	45

<sup>1</sup>Helen K. Hosier, The Other Side of Divorce (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1975), p. 60.

### The Need for Acceptance

There are two important questions that need introduction at this point. These are: (1) Can the Church condescend to open its arms to lives broken by a failing marriage, regardless of the circumstances? and (2) Is it possible that the Church could heal these people by love and mercy? Hosier says that in all our dealings with those who are divorced, we must recognize a certain defensiveness on their part. Rather than criticizing them for it or faulting them for such an attitude, which may show forth in some bitterness at times, she suggests that we help them by accepting them totally.<sup>1</sup> Kantzer maintains that every church knows that a Christian should be willing to forgive a sinner and receive him or her back into the loving fellowship of the body of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

What do the divorced or separated want from the Church? (see table 13.) Ripple replies:

They want the kind of acceptance that Jesus gave to the woman of Jacob's well. In the efforts of the community to open itself to the separated and divorced we sometimes confuse acceptance and approval.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hosier, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup>Kantzer, p. 19-20.

<sup>3</sup>Ripple, p. 114.

TABLE 13  
 DIVORCED AND SEPARATED PERSONS' PERCEPTION  
 OF THEIR CHURCH'S LEVEL OF  
 ACCEPTANCE TOWARD THEM

Question:	Response	
	Yes n	No n
1. Do you think the members criticized you because of divorce/separation?	34	29
2. Did the members try to avoid you during or after your divorce/separation?	32	29
3. Did you feel welcome in their presence during or immediately after your divorce/separation?	25	36
4. Since your divorce/separation would you consider the relationship between yourself and the members of the church stronger?	15	46
5. Did you change your place of worship after your divorce/separation?	10	51

## CHAPTER X

### PRE-SEMINAR SURVEY

#### Introduction

Based on the findings from the interviews with those divorced and separated church members,<sup>1</sup> the general observation can be made that the divorced and separated think that the Church is not as caring as it should be towards them. Because of this observation and the desire to conduct a divorce-separation awareness seminar, a pre-seminar survey was considered necessary to:

1. find out the concept and attitude of church members toward the divorced and separated,
2. compare the findings of the two groups (i.e., divorced and separated vs. church members) to see if there are inconsistencies, and
3. see whether the church members are aware of the needs and concerns of the divorced and separated.

It is believed that this pre-seminar survey will indicate whether or not the feelings of the divorced and separated are justified.

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<sup>1</sup>See chapter 8, figure 5, and chapter 9, tables 10-13.

### Description of the Participants

Three West Indian churches in the Greater New York Conference participated in this study. Two<sup>1</sup> of these churches were selected because they were the largest; the third<sup>2</sup> was chosen because it was the church at which the seminars would be conducted.

The participants were 343 men and women ranging in age from eighteen to over fifty years. All had to be Seventh-day Adventists and members of a West Indian Seventh-day Adventist Church.

### Instruments

A divorce/separation questionnaire opinion poll was developed for this study. It was designed to elicit responses on divorce and separation issues. In this opinion poll, participants were asked their age, sex, marital status, and a set of opinion questions,<sup>3</sup> but were instructed not to write their names.

The questionnaire was used as an instrument to define the nature and types of problems that the respondents think the divorced or separated were experiencing, as well as to obtain their concept of divorce and separation. The participants had a choice of four responses (often, sometimes, seldom, never) and were to select the response that came the closest to their opinion on each question.

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<sup>1</sup>Participation from these two churches, referred to in this study as Church 'A' and Church 'B,' were obtained by contacting their pastors.

<sup>2</sup>Referred to in this study as Church 'C.'

<sup>3</sup>See Appendix I for questionnaire.

### Procedure

Arrangements were made with the host pastors for permission to run this survey in their churches. The eleven o'clock Sabbath service was the time selected for Churches 'A' and 'B' (The pre-seminar survey was given in Church 'C' at the beginning of the first seminar). Ushers were given questionnaires prior to the time of distribution and were informed to distribute only to members.

The purpose of the survey was explained to the congregations and members were encouraged to participate. They were informed that if more than one response was given to any question that questionnaire would be void. Each question was read audibly and the participants were asked to indicate their response by circling one of the four possible responses. Several questions were read a second or third time and sometimes an explanation to the question was given.

### Findings

The data were analyzed and comparisons between the three churches were drawn. The findings indicated that the majority of church members felt that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was not addressing the divorce/separation issue as it should be addressed. In responding to the question, "Do you think that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is facing up to the divorce/separation problem?" of a total of 294<sup>1</sup> members, forty-eight (16%) said "always," eighty (27%) said "sometimes," ninety-eight (33%) said "seldom," and sixty-eight (23%) said "never."

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<sup>1</sup>Not all participants responded to this question.

These questions were designed to elicit information from the respondents in seven areas of concern. These were (1) church members' perception of feelings of isolation of the divorced and separated, (2) the church members' perception of feelings of rejection of the divorced and separated, (3) the church members' concept of divorce and separation, (4) the church members' attitude toward the divorced and separated, (5) the church members' understanding of Matthew 5:32 and 19:1-9, (6) the church members' understanding of the impact of divorce and separation on children, and (7) the church members' concept of the spiritual solution to the divorce/separation problem.

#### Church Members' Perception of Feelings of Isolation of Divorced/Separated

It was found that of the members of the churches surveyed only a small percentage perceived that divorced and separated persons experienced loneliness and isolation. This perception was inconsistent with the findings from the interviewed divorced and separated subjects. Figure 5 shows that sixty persons (98%) claimed that they experienced loneliness during and after their divorce or separation. Table 14, question 1, showed that only a small number of the members had the same perception. In Church 'A,' twenty-four (14%) of the members reported that they felt divorced and separated persons never felt comfortable going to social events. Seven members (6-7%) in Church 'B' responded thus to this question, and in Church 'C' two (3%) responded.

Question 4 dealt with avoidance. It was clear that church members felt that people who are divorced or separated usually try to avoid people, especially during the process of their divorce or



separation. The general conclusion was drawn that there was inconsistency between the perception of those who were divorced or separated and that of the church members on the subject of the isolation that came with divorce and separation.

#### Church Members' Perception of Feelings of Rejection of Divorced/Separated

Table 15 shows the perceptions of church members about the feelings of rejection experienced by the divorced and separated. Comparison of table 13 and Table 15 shows some important findings: (1) from table 13, question 2, 32 of the subjects (52%) claimed that church members tried to avoid them during or after their divorce/separation, (2) Question 4 in the same table revealed that forty-six (75%) of the subjects said that the relationship between themselves and the members of the church deteriorated, and (3) in table 15, the perception of the church members of the level of rejection experienced by the divorced/separated differed considerably from the perceptions of the subjects as shown in table 13. (4) In response to the question, "Do you think the divorced/separated person feels like his/her church has neglected him/her" (table 15, question 2) thirty (19%) of the members in Church 'A' said "always, thirteen (12%) in Church 'B', and eight (14%) in Church 'C'; (5) thirty-one (18%) of the members in Church 'A' said that divorce/separation always caused one to lose friends in the Church, eighteen (17%) said the same in Church 'B', and Church C had thirteen (21%). The result of this comparison showed that there was a difference in the perception of the church members and the divorced and separated on the issue of rejection. Whereas the divorced and separated reported a stronger feeling of

TABLE 14  
CHURCH MEMBERS' PERCEPTION OF FEELINGS OF  
ISOLATION OF DIVORCED/SEPARATED

	Church A	Church B	Church C
Question	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup> n n n n	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup> n n n n	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup> n n n n
1. Do you think the divorced/ separated feel comfortable going to social events even though they are single?	18-98-26-24	7-56-34- 7	5-41-12- 2
2. Do you think West Indians in America who are divorced/ separated receive a lot of support from parents, brothers, and sisters?	25-40-54-30	15-30-43-16	11-29-11- 9
3. Do you think the divorced/ separated have close friends who know and understand them?	37-76-24-22	20-55-21-12	10-35-10- 7
4. Do you think that the divorced/separated try to avoid people even though they want and need them?	32-86-34-13	19-59-17- 8	12-30-15- 3

<sup>1</sup>Abbreviations: AL = always, ST = sometimes, SL = seldom, and N = never.

TABLE 15  
CHURCH MEMBERS' PERCEPTION OF FEELINGS OF  
REJECTION OF DIVORCED/SEPARATED

	Church A	Church B	Church C
Question	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup> n n n n	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup> n n n n	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup> n n n n
1. Do you think the divorced/ separated feel rejected by many of his/her friends?	7-109-39-7	11-78-13- 4	10-37- 6- 3
2. Do you think the divorced/ separated feels like his/ her church has neglected him/her?	30-83-24-22	13-62-21-12	8-39- 6- 3
3. Do you think that divorce/ separation causes one to lose friends in the Church?	31-87-34-13	18-60-17- 8	13-33-12- 2
4. Do you think that there is a feeling of loneliness and rejection that comes with divorce and separation?	40-50-35-19	30-38-18-16	20-17-11- 5

<sup>1</sup>Abbreviations: AL = always, ST = sometimes, SL = seldom, and N = never.

rejection, the church seemed to say that they were not aware of the extent of such rejection.

### Concept of Divorce/Separation in the Churches

Edwin Bontrager says that even though it is true that all Christian denominations use the Bible as their basis for guiding denominational policy, divergent beliefs on the divorce/remarriage question have abounded throughout church history.<sup>1</sup> He contends that the concept of the Church on divorce and remarriage determines its approach toward these persons.<sup>2</sup> Table 16 contains six questions designed to elicit the concept of the church members on divorce and separation. The following was revealed:

1. One hundred and six (33%) of the church members said that divorces always lower the standard of morality.
2. One hundred and forty-five (47%) said that they always thought the best solution to the divorce problem was never to grant divorce.
3. One hundred and sixty-one (50%) of the same church members said divorce is never a good thing.<sup>3</sup>

The conclusion was drawn that the general concept of the church members about divorce and separation was negative. This confirmed the perception of those subjects who were interviewed, and it provided a reason for their turning away from the church as a support system.

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin G. Bontrager, Divorce and the Faithful Church (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1978), p. 66.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>3</sup>To arrive at these percentages, the total number of respondents in all churches were added together, and the total number of answers for each specific response was determined; then the percentage was calculated.

TABLE 16  
CHURCH MEMBERS' CONCEPT OF  
DIVORCE/SEPARATION

	Church A	Church B	Church C
Question	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup> n n n n	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup> n n n n	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup> n n n n
1. Do you think that divorce lowers the standard of morality?	54-58-17-30	41-40-14- 8	11-26- 9- 9
2. Do you think divorce is desirable for adjusting errors in marriage?	14-33-34-77	8-27-20-57	2-18-10-24
3. Do you think that the best solution to the divorce problem is never to grant divorce?	69-43-23-19	49-19-19-12	27-10-13- 2
4. Do you think that divorce is ever justifiable?	9-79-19-47	1-52-23-39	4-35- 7- 6
5. Do you think that divorce is legalized adultery?	37-57-14-41	38-28- 7-20	13- 7-10-23
6. Do you think that although some people abuse the divorce privilege, it is fundamentally a good thing?	11-42-22-83	8-20-21-62	4-17-15-16

<sup>1</sup>Abbreviations: AL = always, ST = sometimes, SL = seldom, and N = never.

Hurt persons need a good environment in which to heal, says Bontrager; they need a place where they can feel accepted no matter what their emotional state or life situation.<sup>1</sup> He recalls the experience of one of his subjects:

After separation, church just was not the same. I tried going to church, but I would come home crying every time. . . . I cannot begin to tell you how it felt to need God so badly, yet feel unacceptable. I tried talking to a minister about my feelings, but his only question was, "Did you have a scriptural reason for divorcing?" After that I quit going.<sup>2</sup>

#### Attitude of Church Members Toward the Divorced/Separated

In general, church members showed a negative attitude toward the divorced and separated (see table 17). In question 1, forty-five (14%) of the members felt that the Church is caring enough towards the divorced/separated. Thirty-seven (19%) said that they always visited divorced and separated members (question 2). In question 3, two hundred and ninety-eight (94%) said there had never been a workshop conducted in their Church geared toward the divorced and separated. And sixty-nine (21%) said that divorced and separated persons should always take active part in church services (question 4).

These findings suggested that the attitude of the Church towards the divorced and separated was not the kind that would enhance and foster love, forgiveness, understanding, and acceptance toward the divorced and separated. A constant reaching out of the Church towards the divorced and separated in love and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit seems to be the only way to change this negative attitude.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p.134.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

TABLE 17  
CHURCH MEMBERS' ATTITUDE TOWARD  
THE DIVORCED AND SEPARATED

	Church A	Church B	Church C
Question	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup>	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup>	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup>
1. Do you think that the church is caring enough towards the divorced/separated?	21-22-54-30	11-33-45-11	13-25-15- 3
2. Have you visited any of your fellow church members since their divorce/separation? <sup>2</sup>	19-45-56-35	10-30-45-21	8-18-12-20
3. Have there been workshops conducted in your church geared toward divorced/separated people?	0- 0- 6-150	0- 0- 5-94	0- 0- 8-54
4. Do you think that divorced/separated persons should take active part in church services?	27-47-42-39	16-33-34-26	26-22- 2- 4

<sup>1</sup>Abbreviations: AL = always, ST = sometimes, SL = seldom, and N = never.

<sup>2</sup>This question does not reveal whether the members do visitation at all. However, it does provide an indication of the members' attitude toward the divorced and separated in the context of this study.





TABLE 19

CHURCH MEMBERS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE  
IMPACT OF DIVORCE/SEPARATION  
ON CHILDREN

	Church A	Church B	Church C
Question	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup> n n n n	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup> n n n n	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup> n n n n
1. Do you think that the children of divorced/separated people are affected socially?	51-71-23-10	28-30-19- 7	31-24- 2- 1
2. Do you think that the absence of a father figure in the home does great harm to the growing child/children?	54-58-30-17	36-45-15- 6	24-32- 2- 0
3. Do you believe that father-absent boys show inappropriate sex-role behavior?	47-81-18- 9	40-45-21- 6	17-26- 9- 6
4. Do you believe father-absent girls behave inappropriately in their heterosexual relationships?	49-81-18- 9	38-45-21- 6	21-23-10- 5

<sup>1</sup>Abbreviations: AL = always, ST = sometimes, SL = seldom, and N = never.

Church Members' Concept of Spiritual  
Solution to the Divorce/  
Separation Problem

In his book, The Wounded Healer, Henri Nouwen asks some very thought-provoking questions: Who can save a child from a burning house without taking the risk of being hurt by the flames? Who can listen to a story of loneliness and despair without taking the risk of experiencing similar pains in his own heart? The great illusion of

leadership, he says, is to think that man can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there.<sup>1</sup>

If the Church is to effectively and successfully lead those who have strayed from the Christian pathway to the road to restoration and spiritual growth, then it must remember its own past pains, hurts, rejections, and failures and how they were overcome. On this note there seems to be hope, great hope, because the church members saw a solution to the problem of wrecked marriages. They saw a workable solution, which comes through the power of the Holy Spirit (see table 20). In responding to question 3 in table 20, "Do you think that the power of the gospel can heal broken marriages?" the responses of the church members were positive. The findings were (1) that 135 members (86%) in Church 'A' said "always", 75 in Church 'B' (75%), and 30 (55%) in Church 'C'; and (2) the same positive attitude is seen in question 2 of table 20: in Church 'A' 119 members (74%) believed that the Holy Spirit can bring reconciliation to wrecked marriages, in Church 'B' 77 members (68%), and in Church 'C' 43 members (77%).

The great tragedy of the legal approach to divorce and remarriage, writes Larry Richards, is the tragedy of all legalism.<sup>2</sup> Because it tears our attention from the human issues involved. Richards says that the legal approach asks "Is it lawful?" The human approach asks, "Is there healing and reconciliation?"<sup>3</sup> Is there a way to heal the hurt of broken commitments? Is there a way to restore

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<sup>1</sup>(Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1979), p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Larry Richards, Remarriage: A Healing Gift from God (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1981), p. 36.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 37, 38.

TABLE 20

CHURCH MEMBERS' CONCEPT OF SPIRITUAL  
SOLUTION TO THE DIVORCE/  
SEPARATION PROBLEM

	Church A	Church B	Church C
Question	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup>	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup>	AL-ST-SL-N <sup>1</sup>
1. Do you think that the Holy Spirit can bring reconciliation to wrecked marriages?	119-25-5-10	77-17- 3-16	31-17- 2- 6
2. Do you think that there is restoration for those who have fallen from grace?	124-21-1- 5	83- 8- 2- 0	42- 9- 2- 1
3. Do you think that the power of the gospel can heal broken marriages?	135-19-0- 2	75-20- 5- 0	30-22- 1- 1
4. Do you think that the SDA Church is facing up to the divorce/separation problem?	27-47-42-34	15-23-33-26	6-11-22- 8

<sup>1</sup>Abbreviations: AL = always, ST = sometimes, SL = seldom, and N = never.

shattered hopes? To these questions, Jesus has already given the answer: "Yes." Yes, says Richards, there is a way; it is the way of greatness, the way of living with each other as little ones. Healing can be found as we set aside anger and are reconciled to our loved one with joy. Healing can come as we bring our hurts into the open and let forgiveness wash away the bitterness and pain. Healing can come as we extend to others the forgiveness we have received from God.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER XI

### DIVORCE/SEPARATION AWARENESS

#### SEMINAR PARADIGM

Up to this point the findings of this study suggested that there is a great need for some kind of support services to the divorced and separated members. Consequently, three two-hour seminars were designed to (1) bring to the awareness of the Church the needs and concerns of its divorced and separated members, (2) provide guidelines to the members of the Church that will help them to work with divorced and separated members, (3) foster and promote a need for pre-marital counseling and strong commitment to the permanency of the marital vows, (4) encourage continued support services to divorced and separated members, and (5) to provide a theological explanation of the synoptic passages dealing with divorce.

Prior to the commencement of each afternoon seminar, the Sabbath sermon focused on themes relevant to the issues in this study. An outline of each sermon and seminar follows.<sup>1</sup>

#### Seminar I: Objectives of the Church

##### Sermon I

1. Sermon Title: The Wrong Question

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix II for completed sermons.

2. Text: Luke 10:29-36
3. Proposition: We should see in this parable a conflict between the lawyer's concept of what it means to be a neighbor and Jesus' concept of what it means for him to be a neighbor.
4. Outline:

Introduction

I. Background to the Parable

- A. The term "Samaritan"
- B. Longstanding conflict
- C. The parable, an indictment

II. The Wrong Question

- A. Who is my neighbor"
- B. Who is a neighbor?
- C. The reverse question

III. What Is God Saying to Us Today through the Parable?

- A. Love and acceptance must be unconditional.
- B. Prejudice in all its forms must be rejected.
- C. We cannot choose our neighbor.

Conclusion: Until the parable speaks to us on this level, we shall never really know what it is teaching. We may know a great deal about the parable in terms of being able to narrate the story. But we shall never really know what the parable means, that is, its significance, until we discover what God is saying to us today through the parable.

## Seminar I

Introduction

1. Participants were welcomed, opening prayer given, and a hymn was sung.
2. An overview of the objectives of the seminar was given: (a) to create an awareness of the needs and concerns of divorced and separated persons, (b) to provide members with insights into their own concepts of and attitudes toward the divorced and separated, and (c) to provide biblical insights into the divorce passages in Matt 19:1-9.
3. Participants were asked to be punctual at the next two sessions.
4. Participants were informed of the importance of attending all three sessions, since evaluation of the seminar could only be valid if all the sessions were attended.
5. The participants were informed that questions would be entertained at any time.
6. The sensitivity of the subject for discussion was emphasized.

Activity I: Members' Perceived Objectives of the Church

Participants were asked to list five objectives of the Church.

Aim: To assess members' perception of their relationship to the divorced and separated members of the church.

Activity II: Divorce/Separation Awareness Questionnaire

The Divorce/Separation Awareness Survey Form<sup>1</sup> was distributed

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix I for instruments.

and the procedure for completion was explained, as had been done in Churches 'A' and 'B'.

Aim: To assess participants' awareness of (1) the divorced or separated person's feelings of isolation, (2) the divorced or separated person's feelings of rejection, (3) their concept of divorce in general, (4) their attitude toward the divorced or separated, (5) their understanding of the Matthean passages (5:32 and 19:1-9), (6) their understanding of the impact of divorce on children, and (7) their concept of the spiritual solution to the divorce/separation problem.

#### Activity III: Stated Objectives of the Church

A list of seven stated objectives of the Church<sup>1</sup> were distributed and discussed. These were (1) spiritual growth of Christians, (2) recognition, development, and use of spiritual gifts; (3) unification of the body in fellowship and service; (4) growth of Christian love; (5) mutual sharing and involvement in one another's lives; (6) maintenance of Christian values; and (7) spreading of the Gospel.

Aim: To highlight specific roles of the Church, especially numbers 4 and 5, thereby emphasizing the need for a caring ministry to the divorced and separated church members who are not attending church.

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<sup>1</sup>Kilinski and Wofford, p. 138.

Activity IV: Comparative Study of Divorce in the Synoptic Gospels

A comparative study was done on the four passages on divorce in the Synoptic Gospels: (1) Luke 16:18; (2) Mark 10:11-12; (3) Matt 5:32; and (4) Matt 19:9.

Aim: To show that only Matthew has an exceptive clause for divorce.

Activity V: Questions and Answers

The last fifteen minutes were reserved for questions and answers.

Aim: (1) To provide feedback for the first four activities; (2) to assess assimilation of information gained; and (3) to clarify any misconception of the issues discussed.

Activity VI: Closing Exercise

A closing hymn was sung and prayer was given by one of the participants. Participants were reminded of the date and time of the next session.

Seminar II: Biblical Principles  
of Divorce (Matthew)

Sermon II

1. Sermon Title: Royalty in Rags
2. Text: Luke 15:11-32
3. Proposition: In this sermon, we see Jesus giving the Pharisees one of the most moving pictures of the depth and magnitude of God's love for one disease-ridden sinful person.
4. Outline:  
Introduction



- I. Gospel Content: The Son
  - A. The request of the son
  - B. The fate of the son
  - C. The decision of the son
- II. Gospel Content: The Father
  - A. Brokenness and loss
  - B. Waiting and watching
  - C. "Action speaks louder than words"
  - D. Celebration and rejoicing
- III. Point of the Story
  - A. Standing next to the Father, we look like that prodigal son--in rags
  - B. The Holy Spirit can convict us of sin so that we may return to the Father
  - C. When we go to the father our rags are removed and we are left with His robe of righteousness
- IV. Lessons from the Story
  - A. The love of the Father
  - B. The criticisms of the son
  - C. Royalties in rags

Conclusion: Because of what Christ has done for us, we must seek and find those "royalties" out there in their "rags", and bring them back to the Fathers' love. If today you feel like you have clothed yourself in the rags of sin, there is hope, for the love of the Father is constant and He wants to remove your rags and clothe you with His robe of righteousness. Why not accept His love today?

## Seminar II

Seminar II was a presentation of the divorce pericope in Matt 19:1-9.

### Introduction

Participants were welcomed and an overview of the objectives of the seminar were reviewed.

### Activity I: Discussion of the Pharisees

A volunteer participant read the passage for discussion (Matt 19:1-3). A discussion followed.

Aim: To focus on the purpose of the Pharisees' question.

Discussion: The Debate over Divorce. It was pointed out that the Jews did not question the legality of divorce, because they felt that it was legalized by Deut 24:1-2. However, they debated about the scope and limits of the reasons for divorce. There were two schools existing during the time of Jesus: (1) the school of Hillel and (2) the school of Shammai. The first was very lenient on the grounds by which one could obtain a divorce; the second was more strict. It was out of this context that the question was asked of Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"

### Activity II: Focus on Jesus' Answer

A volunteer participant read the scripture passage relevant to the discussion (Matt 19:4-6).

Aim: To show the main concern of Jesus' answer; that is, the original will of God for man in marriage.

Discussion: God's original will. It was emphasized that what Jesus did was to point back to the beginning, to the ideal of God's Creation. Jesus cited Gen 1:27 and Gen 2:24 to show the cohesion that the marriage tie produces between a man and a woman. One was to complement the other and this perfect union was to last for life.

Activity III: The Pharisees' Second Question

A volunteer was asked to read the Scripture passage relevant to the discussion (Matt 19:7).

Aim: To show that what Moses did was not in fact "law" but a concession to moralize a deteriorating condition.

Discussion: Why Did Moses Permit Divorce? (Deut 24:1). The following questions were asked rhetorically:

1. Was Moses wrong to have permitted divorce?
2. Are we to abrogate the divine law that was given to Moses?
3. Was Jesus above Moses and the Law?
4. Why was divorce such an easy process?

The following answers were given to explain what was happening in Moses' time:

1. The Jews had a very low concept of women.
2. In the eyes of the Jewish Law a woman was a thing.
3. A woman was considered the possession of her father or her husband.
4. Women had no legal rights at all.

It was explained that Moses' permission for divorce must be seen in the light of his effort to moralize a deteriorating condition and to protect women in particular. It was pointed out that what Moses did

was not in fact "law" but a concession. Moses did not command divorce; he only permitted it.

#### Activity IV: The Exceptive Clause

A volunteer read the scripture portion relevant to the discussion (Matt 19: 8, 9).

Aim: To show Jesus' deep concern which was and is not so much to find a cure for a perverted situation but to advocate its prevention.

Discussion I: "Hardness of Heart." It was pointed out that Jesus endorsed Moses' permission, but criticized the circumstances that generated this permission; that is, (1) the abuse of women in society and (2) the hardness of the heart.

Discussion II: "Except for Fornication." It was explained that although only Matthew had this exceptive clause, there is no positive evidence to show that this exceptive clause in Matthew is an interpolation or an interpretive addition by Matthew or anyone else.

Discussion III: Meaning of Fornication and Adultery—"Porneia and Moicheia." It was shown that adultery carries a more narrow meaning than fornication. Whereas adultery means sexual intercourse between a married man and a woman not his wife, or between a married woman and a man not her husband, fornication includes that and much more. The six meanings that James Cox<sup>1</sup> provided were shared: (1) refusal to grant conjugal rights, (2) adultery, (3) incest and comparable relationships, (4) any sexual deviations, (5) prostitution,

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<sup>1</sup>James Cox, "Class Lectures," West Indies College, Jamaica, W.I., 1978.

and (6) premarital lapse of wife which only comes to light after marriage.

Discussion IV: Jesus' Concern. It was pointed out that Jesus' concern was (1) to establish the permanency of marriage, God's original intention (Matt 19:4-6, 8); i.e., marriage was intended to meet the need for companionship and to provide a proper home--the companionship of the husband and wife was ordained of God as the ideal environment in which to mature Christian character; (2) to protect women who were being abused; and (3) not so much to find a cure for a perverted situation but to advocate its prevention.

Activity V: Divorce on Grounds Other than Fornication. John 8:3-11 was the text used for this discussion.

Aim: To show that Jesus' ministry was non-condemning and that the ministry of the church can be no less.

Discussion: The following points were emphasized: (1) the Church cannot advocate divorce for any and every reason; (2) the Church must seek to uphold the guidelines set forth in Matt 19:1-9; (3) there are cases for divorce that are not on the grounds of adultery that the Church must treat on an individual basis; (4) people who are divorced or separated, regardless of the grounds, should be accepted by the church if they genuinely repent (John 8:11); and (4) God's ideals for marriage must be strongly emphasized.

Activity VI: Questions and Answers.

The last fifteen minutes were reserved for questions and answers.

Aim: (1) to provide feedback for the first five activities;  
(2) to assess assimilation of information gained; (3) to clarify any misconceptions on the subject discussed.

Activity VII: Closing Exercise.

A closing hymn was sung and the benediction was given by one of the participants.

Seminar III: Experiences of Divorced  
and Separated Individuals

Sermon III

1. Sermon Title: Such Great Debt
2. Text: Matt 18:23-30.
3. Proposition: In this parable Jesus taught that we cannot begin to forgive until we first understand God and the magnitude of His forgiveness toward us.
4. Outline:

Introduction

I. Man's Debt to God

- A. Vss. 24 & 25 give us an insight into the coming judgment.
- B. Man seeking forgiveness from God
- C. God's forgiveness

II. Man's Debt to Man

- A. Man's inhumanity to man
- B. Man seeking forgiveness from his fellow man
- C. Man's reaction

III. Circumstances Surrounding the Telling of the Parable

- A. Peter's question, vs. 21

- B. Jesus' answer, vs. 22
- C. Statistical expansion on Jesus' answer.

#### IV. Point of the Parable

- A. Our sins before God
- B. Our brother's debt
- C. Are we willing to forgive?

Conclusion: This parable is speaking to us today at the level of our human experience and understanding. It is saying that as disciples of Christ we cannot ask Peter's question, "How often shall I forgive my brother?" for forgiveness is not numerical, it is not measurable. Instead, forgiveness is a way of life.

### Seminar III

Seminar III focused on (1) sharing the information obtained through the interviews with divorced and separated persons, (2) sharing the information gained from the surveys conducted in the churches, and (3) sharing the information gained from the survey administered in Seminar I.

#### Introduction

Participants were welcomed, an opening hymn and prayer were next.

#### Activity I: Life's Changes and Your Health.

A social readjustment rating scale taken from a study done by Holmes and Rahe<sup>1</sup> was distributed to the participants.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>T. H. Holmes and R. H. Rahe, "Social Readjustment Rating Scale," Journal of Psychosomatic Research (1967), p. 72.

Aim: To illustrate how life changes affect one's health.

Discussion: It was pointed out that the social readjustment rating scale had 43 life events listed. Participants were asked to find life events that could be associated with divorce and separation and to compute the life-crisis units score. It was then pointed out that the total value of life crisis units for life events, if experienced in a two-year period, would produce the following effects: (1) 0 to 150 units, no significant problems; (2) 150 to 199 units, mild life crisis (33% chance of illness); (3) 200 to 299 units, moderate life crisis (50% chance of illness); and (4) 300 or more units, major life crisis (80% chance of illness). It was concluded that a person experiencing divorce or separation was having a major life crisis.

Activity II: Attitudes toward Counseling Services.

Participants were given a handout which showed the general attitudes of West Indians to counseling services.

Aim: To show that a large number of West Indians living in New York City were adverse to professional counseling, and hence they preferred to have informal marital counseling from relatives.

Discussion: The following points were brought out in the discussion: (1) people who experienced divorce and separation (based upon the study done by Holmes and Rahe) have a major life crisis, (2) West Indians are somewhat adverse to counseling services, (3) based on a study done by Livingier and Oliver<sup>1</sup> the admission rates into public

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<sup>2</sup>See Appendix III for handout.

<sup>1</sup>Livingier and Oliver, p. 186.



or private psychiatric hospitals per 100,000 population is highest among divorced and separated persons. The conclusion was drawn that if all of the above were true, then these divorced and separated West Indians needed help from some other source than themselves.

Activity III: The Role of the Church.

Information gained through the interviews with the divorced and separated and from the surveys conducted in the churches was shared.

Aim: To make the participants more aware (1) of the needs and concerns of the divorced and separated, (2) of the attitude of the churches towards the divorced and separated, (3) of the Church's concept of divorce, and (4) to provide suggestions of the role the Church can play towards its divorced and separated members.

Discussion I: The following points were discussed:

1. Divorced and separated West Indians need supportive services since many are separated from close relatives. It was agreed that the Church needed to provide that supportive role.
2. Many divorced or separated persons say that they have not been visited by their church members and/or pastor.
3. Many of those who attended church during or after their divorce or separation did not feel welcome.
4. Most felt that the Church was not caring enough towards the divorced and separated.
5. The majority said that they have never listened to a sermon on divorce or separation that they could consider redemptive.

6. Everyone would like to see a divorce support counseling group formed in their church.

7. Those who had children said that their divorce or separation affected the children significantly.

8. Feelings of anger, depression, loneliness, guilt, and rejection were expressed by all the subjects interviewed.

9. Many experienced a decline in their spiritual life during or after their divorce or separation.

10. Love, understanding, forgiveness, and acceptance were the most prominent needs expressed by the divorced and separated in response to the question, "What do you want from the Church?"

Discussion II: The following points and concepts were expressed by the churches (from the pre-seminar survey):

1. The majority felt that the divorced and separated have not been visited enough.

2. The majority felt that the churches have difficulty forgiving their members who have obtained a divorce.

3. Very few members said that they have offered to pray for a fellow church member who was going through divorce or separation.

4. Most of the members did not feel that divorce in the Seventh-day Adventist Church was on the decline.

5. Many felt that divorce was never justifiable.

6. Many felt that divorce lowers the standard of morality.

Discussion III: Participants were encouraged to ask questions on any of the above-stated points.

Discussion IV: What Can the Church Do? The following suggestions were given:

1. Organize a divorce/separation support group.
2. Put strong emphasis on premarital and marital counseling.
3. Keep emphasizing God's ideal, that is, "Until death do us part."
4. Develop tolerance and acceptance for those who have fallen from grace.
5. Provide love for those who are experiencing rejection and seek to visit and pray with those who are divorced or separated.
6. Seek to develop a ministry like Christ's, a non-condemnatory one.
7. Offer free hospitable space where the divorced and separated can come and cast off their strangeness and feel at home.
8. Be aware of the financial difficulties that sometimes come with divorce and separation and when necessary and possible offer help.
9. Reach out to the children of the divorced and separated with a desire to provide them with understanding and love.
10. Keep emphasizing what the power of the Holy Spirit can do to bring healing to wrecked marriages.

Activity IV: Questions and Answers. (15 minutes were allowed for questions and answers.

Aim: (1) To provide feedback for the first three activities, (2) to assess assimilation of information provided, and (3) to clarify any misconceptions on the items discussed.

Activity V: Post Divorce/Separation Awareness Questionnaire

The Divorce/Separation Awareness Survey Form was distributed.

Aim: To assess changes, if any, in the attitudes of the participants in the following areas: (1) awareness of the feelings of isolation and rejection among the divorced and separated, (2) concept of divorce in general, (3) attitude toward the divorced and separated, (4) understanding of the Matthean passages (5:32 and 19:1-9), (5) comprehension of the impact of divorce on children, and (6) their understanding of the spiritual solution to the divorce/separation problem.

Activity VI: Closing Exercise

Thanks were expressed to the participants for their support and they were encouraged to put into practice the insights they had gained. A closing hymn was sung and prayer was given by the church pastor. An informal fellowship took place afterwards.

## CHAPTER XII

### RESULTS OF POST-SEMINAR SURVEY

This chapter contains the results of the post-seminar survey that was conducted in church 'C'. The seminar was conducted on three successive Saturday afternoons at the same time and place. The average attendance of sixty was constant and the instruments used in the pre-seminar survey were the same for the post-seminar survey.

The results were grouped into the following areas: (1) the church members' perception of feelings of isolation of the divorced and separated, (2) the church members' perception of feelings of rejection of the divorced and separated, (3) the church members' concept of divorce and separation, (4) the church members' attitude toward the divorced and separated, (5) the church members' understanding of Matthew 5:32 and 19:1-9, (6) the church members' understanding of the impact of divorce and separation on children, and (7) the church members' concept of the spiritual solution to the divorce/separation problem.

These seven areas are reflected in tables 21-27. These tables consist of a comparison between the members' responses to the pre-seminar survey and the post-seminar survey done in church 'C'.

Summary of Pre- and Post-  
Seminar Results

The divorce/separation awareness seminar brought to the awareness of church members the needs and concerns of divorced and separated persons as well as their own attitude towards the divorced and separated and their concept of divorce.

The seminar established the following findings;

1. Most church members were not fully aware of the feelings of loneliness, isolation, and rejection that come with divorce and separation, at least not to the point that awareness generated a desire to reach out and help (see tables 21 and 22). The seminar developed awareness to the extent that members said, "we did not know," "we did not understand," "we wanted to help," "we cared."

2. A broader concept of divorce was demonstrated by the majority of church members (see table 23, numbers 2-4).

3. Twenty-seven (51%) of the church members in the pre-seminar survey felt that the best solution to the divorce problem was never to grant divorce. In the post-seminar survey eight (12.9%) felt the same way (see table 23).

4. There was an overall increase in the awareness of the needs of divorced and separated persons on the part of church members as shown in table 24.

5. The seminar provided an understanding of the Matthean passages (5:32 and 19:1-9) in that twenty (32%) in the pre-seminar survey said that they understood most of what the passages were about, but in the post-seminar survey forty-seven (78%) responded that they understood the passages (see table 25).

TABLE 21  
COMPARISON OF CHURCH MEMBERS'<sup>1</sup> PERCEPTION OF  
THE FEELINGS OF ISOLATION OF THE  
DIVORCED AND SEPARATED

Question	Pre-Seminar				Post-Seminar			
	AL n	ST n	SL n	N <sup>2</sup> n	AL n	ST n	SL n	N <sup>2</sup> n
1. Do you think the divorced/ separated feel comfortable going to social events even though they are single?	5	41	12	2	6	26	20	8
2. Do you think West Indians in America who are divorced/ separated receive a lot of support from parents, brothers, and sisters?	11	29	11	9	10	19	22	11
3. Do you think the divorced/ separated have close friends who know and understand them?	10	35	10	7	15	29	16	6
4. Do you think that the divorced/separated try to avoid people even though they want and need them?	12	30	15	3	30	17	10	3

<sup>1</sup>Church C only.

<sup>2</sup>Abbreviations: AL = always, ST = sometimes, SL = seldom, and N  
= never.

TABLE 22  
 COMPARISON OF CHURCH MEMBERS'<sup>1</sup> PERCEPTION OF  
 THE FEELINGS OF REJECTION OF THE  
 DIVORCED AND SEPARATED

Question	Pre-Seminar				Post-Seminar			
	AL n	ST n	SL n	N <sup>2</sup> n	AL n	ST n	SL n	N <sup>2</sup> n
1. Do you think the divorced/ separated feel rejected by many of his/her friends?	10	37	6	3	30	16	9	2
2. Do you think the divorced/ separated feels like his/ her church has neglected him/her?	8	39	6	3	31	19	2	0
3. Do you think that divorce/ separation causes one to lose friends in the Church?	13	33	12	2	26	30	8	1
4. Do you think that there is a feeling of loneliness and rejection that comes with divorce and separation?	20	17	11	5	40	18	3	0

<sup>1</sup>Church C only.

<sup>2</sup>Abbreviations: AL = always, ST = sometimes, SL = seldom, and N  
 = never.



TABLE 23  
COMPARISON OF CHURCH MEMBERS'<sup>1</sup> CONCEPT  
OF DIVORCE AND SEPARATION

Question	Pre-Seminar				Post-Seminar			
	AL n	ST n	SL n	N <sup>2</sup> n	AL n	ST n	SL n	N <sup>2</sup> n
1. Do you think that divorce lowers the standard of morality?	11	26	9	9	9	17	16	12
2. Do you think divorce is desirable for adjusting errors in marriage?	2	18	10	24	10	30	8	11
3. Do you think that the best solution to the divorce problem is never to grant divorce?	27	10	13	2	8	14	16	24
4. Do you think that divorce is ever justifiable?	4	35	7	6	30	20	8	4
5. Do you think that divorce is legalized adultery?	13	7	10	23	7	10	32	13
6. Do you think that although some people abuse the divorce privilege, it is fundamentally a good thing?	4	17	15	16	40	19	1	2

<sup>1</sup>Church C only.

<sup>2</sup>Abbreviations: AL = always, ST = sometimes, SL = seldom, and N = never.

TABLE 24  
COMPARISON OF CHURCH MEMBERS'<sup>1</sup> ATTITUDES  
TOWARD THE DIVORCED AND SEPARATED

Question	Pre-Seminar				Post-Seminar			
	AL n	ST n	SL n	N <sup>2</sup> n	AL n	ST n	SL n	N <sup>2</sup> n
1. Do you think that the church is caring enough towards the divorced/separated?	13	25	15	3	5	15	26	3
2. Have you visited any of your fellow church members since their divorce/separation?	8	18	12	20	9	17	15	18
3. Have there been workshops conducted in your church geared toward divorced/separated people?	0	0	8	54	0	52	9	1
4. Do you think that divorced/separated persons should take active part in church services?	26	22	2	4	32	20	5	4

<sup>1</sup>Church C only.

<sup>2</sup>Abbreviations: AL = always, ST = sometimes, SL = seldom, and N = never.

TABLE 25  
COMPARISON OF CHURCH MEMBERS'<sup>1</sup> UNDERSTANDING  
OF MATTHEW 5:32 AND 19:1-9

Question	Pre-Seminar				Post-Seminar			
	AL n	ST n	SL n	N <sup>2</sup> n	AL n	ST n	SL n	N <sup>2</sup> n
1. Do you understand the divorce passages in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9?	10	20	27	4	2	47	10	1
2. Do you think that divorce is ever justifiable?	4	35	7	6	2	52	0	3
3. Do you think that divorce is legalized adultery?	13	7	10	23	4	40	10	6

<sup>1</sup>Church C only.

<sup>2</sup>Abbreviations: AL = always, ST = sometimes, SL = seldom, and N = never.

6. It was very clear from the pre-seminar survey that most members had little knowledge of the effects of divorce on children (see table 26). The seminar provided them with this added knowledge; consequently, the post-seminar survey showed an increase in their awareness.

7. The overwhelming majority of church members think that the Holy Spirit can bring reconciliation to wrecked marriages and offers restoration for those who have fallen from grace (see table 27).

The conclusion, therefore, can be drawn that the seminar created greater awareness in the minds of these church members both in their understanding of the needs and concerns of the divorced and separated and in their own feelings, concepts, and attitudes toward the divorced and separated.

TABLE 26  
 COMPARISON OF CHURCH MEMBERS'<sup>1</sup> UNDERSTANDING  
 OF THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN

Question	Pre-Seminar				Post-Seminar			
	AL n	ST n	SL n	N <sup>2</sup> n	AL n	ST n	SL n	N <sup>2</sup> n
1. Do you think that the children of divorced/separated people affected socially?	31	24	2	1	2	52	0	3
2. Do you think that the absence of a father figure in the home does great harm to the growing child/children?	24	32	2	0	44	15	1	0
3. Do you believe that father-absent boys show inappropriate sex-role behavior?	17	26	9	6	30	25	5	2
4. Do you believe father-absent girls behave inappropriately in their heterosexual relationships?	21	23	10	5	27	24	3	2

<sup>1</sup>Church C only.

<sup>2</sup>Abbreviations: AL = always, ST = sometimes, SL = seldom, and N = never.

TABLE 27  
COMPARISON OF CHURCH MEMBERS'<sup>1</sup> CONCEPT OF  
SPIRITUAL SOLUTION TO THE DIVORCE/  
SEPARATION PROBLEM

Question	Pre-Seminar				Post-Seminar			
	AL n	ST n	SL n	N <sup>2</sup> n	AL n	ST n	SL n	N <sup>2</sup> n
1. Do you think that the Holy Spirit can bring reconciliation to wrecked marriages?	31	17	2	6	40	20	1	0
2. Do you think that there is restoration for those who have fallen from grace?	42	9	2	1	45	12	3	1
3. Do you think that the power of the gospel can heal broken marriages?	30	22	1	1	46	11	1	1
4. Do you think that the SDA Church is facing up to the divorce/separation problem?	6	11	22	8	4	9	19	27

<sup>1</sup>Church C only.

<sup>2</sup>Abbreviations: AL = always, ST = sometimes, SL = seldom, and N = never.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Summary

The episode recorded in Matt 19:1-9 and presented in Part I shows that Jesus spoke in an atmosphere that was both vexed and troubled. The schools of Hillel and Shammai were bitter opponents in their interpretation of Deut 24:1. Rabbis of both schools referred to "erwat debar" (literal meaning: a shame of a thing), but Hillel stressed the debar and this led to the argument that anything was sufficient for divorce. Shammai, on the other hand, stressed the erwat and insisted that the cause must be something shameful.

Because of these teachings the Pharisees sought to trap Jesus on the question of divorce and remarriage. Jesus established the revealed will of God by pointing out: (1) The original purpose of the creation of Adam and Eve, (2) the fundamental law of marriage as stated by God Himself, and (3) the nature of the marriage contract.

In this three-fold answer the Pharisees saw no grounds for divorce. However, with Moses' command (Deut 24), they sought to find out if Christ was abrogating the divine law which was given to Moses. Christ responded by criticizing what happened in the past and pointed out that Moses gave "permission" for divorce because of a state of affairs that was chaotically promiscuous. He then showed the

condition under which God's original will could be altered . . .

"except for porneia."

In the examination of the parallel synoptics for this condition ("except for porneia") it was discovered that only Matthew had the exception (5:32; 19:9). The obvious omission in Mark and Luke raised questions as to the genuineness as well as the originality of the text. The arguments purported by scholars who claimed that the Markan and Lukan passages gave more certain and clear teachings on divorce and remarriage were studied and at the same time the case of a Markan priority for the synoptics were examined.

It was pointed out that from research it does not seem possible to adduce any textual arguments against the genuineness of these Matthean clauses (5:32; 19:9). In addition, later twentieth-century New Testament scholars are acknowledging a Matthean priority. The "two-document" hypothesis was considered, and the work done by Farmer, who showed the weakness of this hypothesis, was noted.

"Porneia," as was pointed out, has several meanings and these must all be considered in their context. Therefore Matt 5:32 and 19:9 must be seen in the light of Deuteronomy and the context of Matthew.

It was suggested that one should take "another look" at the exceptive clause. The "other look" calls for greater realism in looking at individual persons and the concrete situation in which they find themselves. A meaningful parallel between the Sabbath and marriage was brought out, and Mark 2:27 was homiletically applied to marriage. Paul's attitude on divorce seems to support Matthew's exceptions (1 Cor 7). Both Paul and Matthew seem to suggest that while the ideal of God for man in marriage must be maintained, the



Church today must assume the responsibility of finding a practical solution to the problem of wrecked marriages. It was concluded therefore that:

1. Divorce is not ideal but permissible, "on condition."
2. One of the true meanings of the study on Matt 19:9 was to understand and see Jesus' deep concern for protecting society, and women in particular, from abuses.

In Part II the needs and concerns of divorced and separated Seventh-day Adventist West Indians are discussed. The attitude of the church members toward the divorced and separated as well as their concept of divorce and separation, in general, were surveyed.

To undertake this task, a sociological study of West Indians was done. From this study it was discovered that: (1) West Indians have problems adjusting to their new environment, (2) a trained West Indian immigrant oftentimes must take work that does not utilize his or her training, (3) social changes affect traditional roles of West Indian immigrants, and (4) West Indians have an attitudinal barrier regarding the utilization of social services. It was shown that these discoveries had a great effect on the stability of West Indian families.

Sixty-one divorced and separated West Indians were interviewed. It was discovered that adultery was not the primary cause for divorce and separation. Divorces result from a culmination of other factors<sup>1</sup> such as "break down of marriage/incompatibility" and living separately and apart. Divorce and separation were shown to be

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<sup>1</sup>See figure 2.

major life crises and that persons who separate and then divorce within a six months period had an 80 percent chance of becoming ill. It was pointed out that the admission rate into outpatient psychiatric clinics and public or private psychiatric hospitals in the United States were highest among divorced and separated persons.

Among the subjects interviewed, the feelings that were strongly associated with divorce and separation were (1) loneliness, (2) depression, (3) guilt, (4) anger, and (5) grief. It was also found that few men reported major economic problems related to their divorce, while most women did report economic problems.

The spirituality of those interviewed was influenced by many variables but especially by the receptivity of their churches during and after the divorce or separation. It was pointed out that divorced and separated West Indians want the following from the Church: (1) understanding, (2) love, (3) forgiveness, and (4) acceptance.

A pre-seminar survey was administered in Church 'C' followed by a divorce/separation awareness seminar. At the conclusion of the seminar a post-seminar survey was conducted which revealed: (1) church members had a greater awareness of the loneliness and isolation that comes with divorce, (2) they had a greater awareness of the feelings of rejection experienced by the divorced and separated, (3) church members had a broader concept of divorce and separation, (4) church members had a more favorable attitude toward the divorced and separated, (5) church members had a greater understanding of Matt 5:32 and 19:1-9, (6) church members were more aware of how divorce and separation affect children, and (7) church members had a stronger

belief in the spiritual solution to the divorce and separation problem.

### Conclusions

In consideration of this two-part study on divorce and separation the following conclusions are drawn:

1. In response to the Pharisees' question on divorce, Jesus affirmed the original will of God for marriage and the family: it should last "till death do us part."
2. The exceptive clause in Matthew was not given as an escape from failed marriages, but, among other considerations, to protect women who were being abused.
3. Moses did not command divorce; he only permitted it because of a deteriorating condition.
4. For Jesus the issue in Matt 19:1-9 was not the controversy between the two leading schools over the question of divorce; He moved beyond the question to the individual. For Him human beings were (and are) more important than an institution.
5. While the Church must constantly uphold and promulgate the ideal of God for marriage, it is at the same time called upon to look at individual persons and the concrete situation in which they find themselves.
6. The common practice among West Indians whereby one spouse migrates to the United States, primarily for higher education or economic opportunities, has had a negative effect on many marriages within that group.

7. In order to survive, many West Indian immigrants accept employment that does not utilize their specialized training. Ultimately, this practice has a negative effect on the marital relationship.

8. West Indians are averse to professional counseling, hence they prefer to receive informal marital counseling from relatives, friends, and fellow West Indians rather than from professionals. This can be destructive at times when a crisis needs specialized help.

9. Persons who are divorced or separated were repeatedly found to be over-represented among psychiatric patients. However, West Indians are reluctant to be included in such statistics.

10. The facts (a) that West Indians are adverse to professional counseling and (b) that divorced and separated persons are over-represented at psychiatric hospitals and clinics show that divorced and separated West Indians need a support group. The Church needs to be aware of this and provide that support group.

11. Among the subjects interviewed, loneliness was stated as one of the strong emotional pains, primarily because many were estranged from family and home.

12. Since most West Indians come to America to seek economic support, the occurrence of a divorce puts a greater economic burden on the divorced or separated to maintain themselves in the United States. They usually continue to meet the financial obligations of dependents in the West Indies.

13. Many of the subjects interviewed admitted that they used their tithe during moments of financial difficulties.

14. The subjects identified four needs that they wanted filled by the Church: understanding, love, forgiveness, and acceptance.

15. A number of West Indian Seventh-day Adventist Church members felt that the Adventist Church was not facing up to the divorce/separation issue.

16. Feelings of rejection were strong among the subjects; they felt that their Church had neglected them at a time when they needed it most.

17. Among the churches surveyed very few members claimed to have visited those of their congregations who were divorced or separated.

18. There had been no workshop conducted on divorce or separation in any of the West Indian churches studied.

19. The majority of West Indians that were interviewed or assessed felt that the "power of the gospel" can bring healing to broken marriages.

20. The West Indian Seventh-day Adventist Churches that were surveyed in the Greater New York Conference were not as aware as they could have been of the needs and concerns of divorced and separated West Indian members. In addition, they were neither as aware of their own attitudes toward the divorced and separated members nor as aware of their concept of divorce in general as they should have been.

These conclusions highlighted the need for (1) a greater understanding of the biblical passages on divorce by both pastors and members, (2) an understanding of West Indian culture and problems, (3) an understanding of the problems that come with divorce and

separation, and (4) an understanding of the Church's attitude toward the divorced and separated and concept of divorce.

These needs for understanding call for changes where they are indicated which will in turn foster and enhance new growth, new trust, new love, and new acceptance. It is therefore anticipated that this study on divorce and separation has provided that awareness for all concerned and that with this awareness necessary steps will be taken to avert further deterioration of the home and family.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CONTRIBUTION TO MY MINISTRY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Contribution to My Ministry

This research has had a positive impact on me and my ministry and has made the following contributions.

1. It challenged me to be more supportive of marriage itself by taking seriously the responsibility for ongoing enrichment for the already married. This calls for strong post-wedding emphasis.

2. One of the tremendous lessons learned from the divorced and separated is that they are patient with the Church in ways that many of us are not. This lesson has helped me to develop more patience with the members of my congregations, especially for those who seem to be non-committed and non-involved.

3. In my dealings with those who were divorced and separated, I recognized a certain defensiveness on their part. This research has helped me to understand that rather than criticizing them for it or being less accepting, I should move beyond their defense to try to understand the pain, hurt, and feelings of rejection.

4. This study has helped me to understand that the failure of a marriage I have worked with does not mean that I have failed as a

minister. The decision to divorce is not the end of my involvement with a family; in fact, it may signal the beginning.

5. Conducting the seminars in my own church provided the opportunity to learn the chemistry of the church on a specific issue, mainly divorce and separation. With this knowledge I was able to develop a ministry geared toward meeting individual and specific needs as well as the collective and general needs.

6. My church has already taken steps to correct the negative impression the divorce and separated members had of them. A visitation program has been developed which is targeted not only toward divorced and separated members who have been irregular attenders, but toward other delinquent members as well.

7. A social committee was formed to provide recreational activities for the church in general with a desire to reach those who might be experiencing loneliness and rejection.

8. Plans have already been put in progress to develop a divorce support group; there are also plans to utilize the professional help available within and outside the church for seminars and workshops on other relevant issues.

9. Dates have been set to conduct a cooking class with a specific intent to include members of the congregation who have gone through divorce or separation. One of the purposes of this class is to provide group activities for single persons.

10. As a result of my interest in this study, two churches invited me to conduct seminars on (1) "singleness" and (2) divorce and separation.



11. Above all, this study has helped me as a minister to understand that the redemptive act of God in Christ is the good news that no person need be excluded from a relationship with the Savior. No matter what offence has been committed, no matter how far one has drifted from God's love, there is always forgiveness and grace if genuine repentance is sought.

### Recommendations

The conclusions of the study have implications in two main areas: practice and future research. The research holds implications for pastors, church members, divorced and separated persons, West Indian families, counselors, and family therapists. These recommendations are:

1. A replication of the study could be done using West Indians in other cities in the United States. It would be helpful to compare the findings of these studies to determine if they are generalizable.

2. A correlation study could be conducted on the needs and concerns of divorced and separated West Indians and other minority groups. It is assumed that while some issues may be common to both groups, both groups will have quite different focuses. Such a study could be helpful to both pastors and church members, especially those of cosmopolitan congregations.

3. A comparative study could be done on the divorce rate within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, comparing churches that emphasis strong marriages and the original intention of God for the

family with churches that have little or no emphasis on strong marriages and the original intention of God for the family.

4. Pastors should seek to conduct a needs assessment geared towards the divorced and separated and then construct a program to meet those identified needs. It is assumed that from this assessment important needs will emerge, such as: (1) the need for a divorce/separation support group system; (2) the need for divorce/separation seminars; (3) the need for more sermons on the family, marriage, divorce, and separation; (4) the need for divorced and separated persons to be visited and prayed with.

5. Pastors should set up within their congregations a Biblical platform on which members can stand. The interviews reveal that many have chosen to ignore the controversial subject of divorce and separation. However, it is believed (based upon the seminars conducted) that if this subject is brought out in the open and given sound Biblical teaching and practical application, members not only will feel at ease with the subject of divorce and separation, but will know how to handle those who are divorced and separated.

6. Pastors should play the leading role in directing the process of leading the Church toward a new sense of love, compassion, understanding, forgiveness, and acceptance towards those who are divorced and separated.

7. This study should promote insights and awareness for immigrating West Indian Seventh-day Adventist workers about the issues involved in divorced and separated West Indian Seventh-day Adventists in a North American context.

8. The divorce/separation awareness seminar that this study provided could be utilized by pastors with large contingencies of West Indians in their congregations. Non-West-Indian pastors with West Indian congregations should seek to understand the social and cultural background of West Indians.

9. The Church at all times should put strong emphasis on marriage, its permanence, its values, expectations, and responsibilities. It should develop (whenever possible) pre- and post-marital counseling, marriage enrichment weekends, singles retreats, and engagement seminars.

10. The Church should assist the divorced and separated with friendships that can give help regarding finances, all kinds of decision making, vocational guidance, grief therapy, and spiritual nurturing.

11. It is believed that the local church is usually viewed as a strong support of the family; therefore, it is advised that the church mobilize the resources and develop the skills that would enable them to help families counter the forces that tend to destroy family life.

12. Members should be aware of the needs and concerns of divorced and separated persons as well as their feelings of loneliness and rejection; members should seek in every possible way to visit, call, pray with, and accept those of their congregation who are divorced or separated.

13. The unmarried who are (or will be) contemplating marriage will find it helpful to study the counsels given in the writings of

Ellen G. White and the Bible on 'marriage,' 'being unequally yoked,' the 'family,' and the 'home'.

14. For married couples it will be of help to understand the pain and isolation, the feelings of rejection, loneliness, grief, depression, and guilt that come with divorce and separation and, therefore, try to maintain the marriage relationship by the grace of God and the power of His Holy Spirit.

15. Those who are divorced and separated should bring to the Church the tremendous lesson of patience that they have learned. They can develop the ability to accept the humanness of the Church as well as the ability to wait for its healing. They can develop the capacity to be healed as well as the willingness to heal others within the Church.

16. A sociological study on West Indians should be of interest to psychiatrists and other mental health professionals for two reasons: (a) as members of and leaders in society they are expected to be informed and knowledgeable about major social trends, and (b) an understanding of the phenomena specific to this group will help them distinguish them from pathology of other origins and increase the potential for effective treatment.

## APPENDICES

# APPENDIX I

## DIVORCE/SEPARATION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DIVORCED/SEPARATED PERSONS

The following statements express feelings and attitudes that people frequently experience in a divorced or separated situation. There are four responses to choose from in the answer area. Kindly check the response that comes closest to your reaction in each possibility. These are: (1) often, (2) sometimes, (3) seldom, (4) never.

	Often	Some- times	Seldom	Never
1. I am comfortable telling people I am divorced/separated from my spouse.	0	0	0	0
2. I feel capable of living the kind of life I would like to live.	0	0	0	0
3. I feel rejected by many of the friends I had when I was still married.	0	0	0	0
4. I feel lonely.	0	0	0	0
5. I feel comfortable being with people	0	0	0	0
6. I like the person I am.	0	0	0	0
7. I feel as though I am in a daze.	0	0	0	0
8. I feel comfortable going to social events even though I am single.	0	0	0	0
9. I feel I know and understand my body.	0	0	0	0
10. I feel that my friends look at me as though I am unstable now that I am separated.	0	0	0	0
11. I feel like my church has neglected me.	0	0	0	0
12. I feel like I don't want to pray.	0	0	0	0

In the blank by each of the following statements, write the number from the following scale which best expresses your view:

(1) strongly disagree, (2) tend to disagree, (3) tend to agree, (4) strongly agree, (5) don't know.

- \_\_\_ 1. I have close friends who know and understand me.
- \_\_\_ 2. Since my divorce/separation my body weight has been changing.
- \_\_\_ 3. I have trouble sleeping at nights.
- \_\_\_ 4. I try to avoid people even though I want and need them.
- \_\_\_ 5. The pressures and problems at work are far worse for a divorced/separated person.
- \_\_\_ 6. This divorce/separation has affected my children.
- \_\_\_ 7. I have unpleasant experiences with those who work for me (e.g, service or repairmen).
- \_\_\_ 8. I believe the church should be more caring towards the divorced/separated.
- \_\_\_ 9. My divorce/separation has affected my relationship with my relatives.
- \_\_\_ 10. I am afraid to trust people who might become love partners.
- \_\_\_ 11. My health has been affected by my divorce/separation.
- \_\_\_ 12. My children have problems in their social relationships.

DIVORCE/SEPARATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR  
DIVORCED/SEPARATED PERSONS

The following are a number of questions to be asked by the questioner of divorced/separated persons.

1. Since your divorce/separation would you consider the relationship between yourself and the members of the church stronger, weaker, or the same?
2. Did you lose any friends in the church because of your divorce?\_\_\_\_  
How many?\_\_\_\_
3. Did you used to go to prayer meeting during your marriage?\_\_\_\_  
Have you been going or not going now?
4. Have you ever been visited by any of your fellow church members since your divorce/separation?\_\_\_\_ About how many times?\_\_\_\_
5. Did any of them pray with you?\_\_\_\_
6. Did any criticize you?\_\_\_\_ Avoid you?\_\_\_\_
7. Were you visited by your pastor?
8. If yes, how many times?\_\_\_\_
9. Did you receive a call from any of your church members?\_\_\_\_
10. Did you feel welcome in their presence?\_\_\_\_
11. Have you had a meaningful faith?\_\_\_\_
12. Is your faith more meaningful, less meaningful, or the same?\_\_\_\_
13. Do you feel free to talk about your divorce to the members of the church?\_\_\_\_
14. Do you think the members were supportive enough?\_\_\_\_
15. Did you change your place of worship after your divorce/separation?\_\_\_\_
16. Did you stop going to church for a while during or after your divorce/separation?\_\_\_\_



17. Do you think the ministers you have had in the past were sympathetic to divorced people?\_\_\_
18. Have you ever listened to a sermon on divorce/separation that you considered redemptive?\_\_\_
19. Have there been any workshops conducted in your church geared toward divorced/separated people?\_\_\_
20. Do you think that your church showed love to you during this difficult period?\_\_\_
21. Did you feel comfortable during the worship service?\_\_\_
22. Did you ever feel that you were the topic for the discussion among the ladies?\_\_\_
23. Do you have reasons to justify this feeling?\_\_\_
24. Are the members as close to you now as they were before the divorce/separation?\_\_\_
25. Have you ever been an officer in the church since your divorce?\_\_\_
26. Do you now take active part in the church? Did you before your divorce/separation?\_\_\_
27. Do you consider yourself more faithful to God, less faithful since your divorce/separation?\_\_\_
28. Is it less difficult, more difficult, or the same to return your tithe?
29. Do you think the church has a Biblical concept of Jesus' teaching on divorce?\_\_\_
30. Did you find yourself reliving the pain of divorce/separation during this interview?\_\_\_
31. How do you think the church can minister to divorced/separated persons?
32. Would you like to see a divorce/support group form in your church-conference?
33. Would you like to see the church implement programs designed toward the needs and concerns of divorced/separated persons?

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME

DIVORCE/SEPARATION QUESTIONNAIRE OPINION POLL  
FOR CHURCH MEMBERS

SEX: ☐ M ☐ F

STATUS: ☐ Married ☐ Divorced ☐ Separated ☐ Single

AGE: ☐ Under 20 ☐ 20-35 ☐ 36-49 ☐ Over 50

The following questionnaire is designed to elicit your response on Divorce/Separation. There are four responses to choose from in the answer area. Kindly check the response that comes closest to your opinion to each question. (1) Always, (2) Sometimes, (3) Seldom, (4) Never.

	Always	Some- times	Seldom	Never
--	--------	----------------	--------	-------

- |  |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Do you think that the divorced/<br>separated feels rejected by<br>of his/her friends?                               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Do you think the divorced/<br>separated feels comfortable<br>going to social events even<br>though they are single? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Do you think the divorced/<br>separated feels like his/her<br>church has neglected him/her?                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Do you think that divorce<br>lowers the standard of morality?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Do you think that divorce is<br>desirable for adjusting errors<br>in marriage?                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Do you think the divorced/<br>separated attends church<br>services regularly?                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

	Always	Some- times	Seldom	Never
7. Do you think that the church is caring enough towards the divorced/separated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Do you think that divorce/separation causes one to lose friends in the church?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Do you think that divorce is ever justified?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Do you think that the best solution to the divorce problem is never to grant divorce?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Do you think that the Holy Spirit can bring reconciliation to wrecked marriages?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Do you think that divorce is legalized adultery?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Do you think that there is restoration for those who have fallen from grace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Do you think that although some people abuse the divorce privilege, it is fundamentally a good thing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Do you think that the S.D.A. Church is facing up to the divorce/separation problem?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Do you think that the power of the gospel can heal broken marriages?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Do you think that divorce or separation should be classified as a major life crisis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Do you think that a person who separates and then divorces within a six-month period is likely to become a psychiatric patient?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Always	Some- times	Seldom	Never
19. Do you think that there is a feeling of loneliness and rejection that comes with divorce and separation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Do you think that divorced or separated people have a right to feel hurt and angry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Do you think that divorce is a kind of death that brings more pain than physical death?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Do you think that West Indians in America who are divorced or separated receive a lot of support from parents, brothers, and sisters?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Do you think that the children of divorced or separated people are affected socially?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Do you believe that the absence of a father figure in the home does great harm to the growing child/children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. Do you think that economic adjustments affect the whole recovery of divorced or separated people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. Do you think that New York City provides more problems of adjustment than many other cities for divorce/separated persons?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. Do you think that there is a close relationship between economic stability and spiritual growth for divorced/separated persons?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. Do you think it is more difficult for the divorced/separated person to return a faithful tithe?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Always	Some- times	Seldom	Never
29. Do you think that divorce that is not on the grounds of adultery can be forgiven?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. Do you think that divorced or separated persons should take active part in church services?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. Do you think the divorced/separated feels comfortable being with people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. Do you think that the divorced/separated try to avoid people even though they want and need them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. Do you think the divorced/separated have close friends who know and understand them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. Have you ever visited any of your fellow church members since their divorce/separation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. Do you understand the divorce passages in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36. Do you believe father-absent boys show inappropriate sex-role behaviors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37. Do you believe father-absent girls behave inappropriately in their heterosexual relationships?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

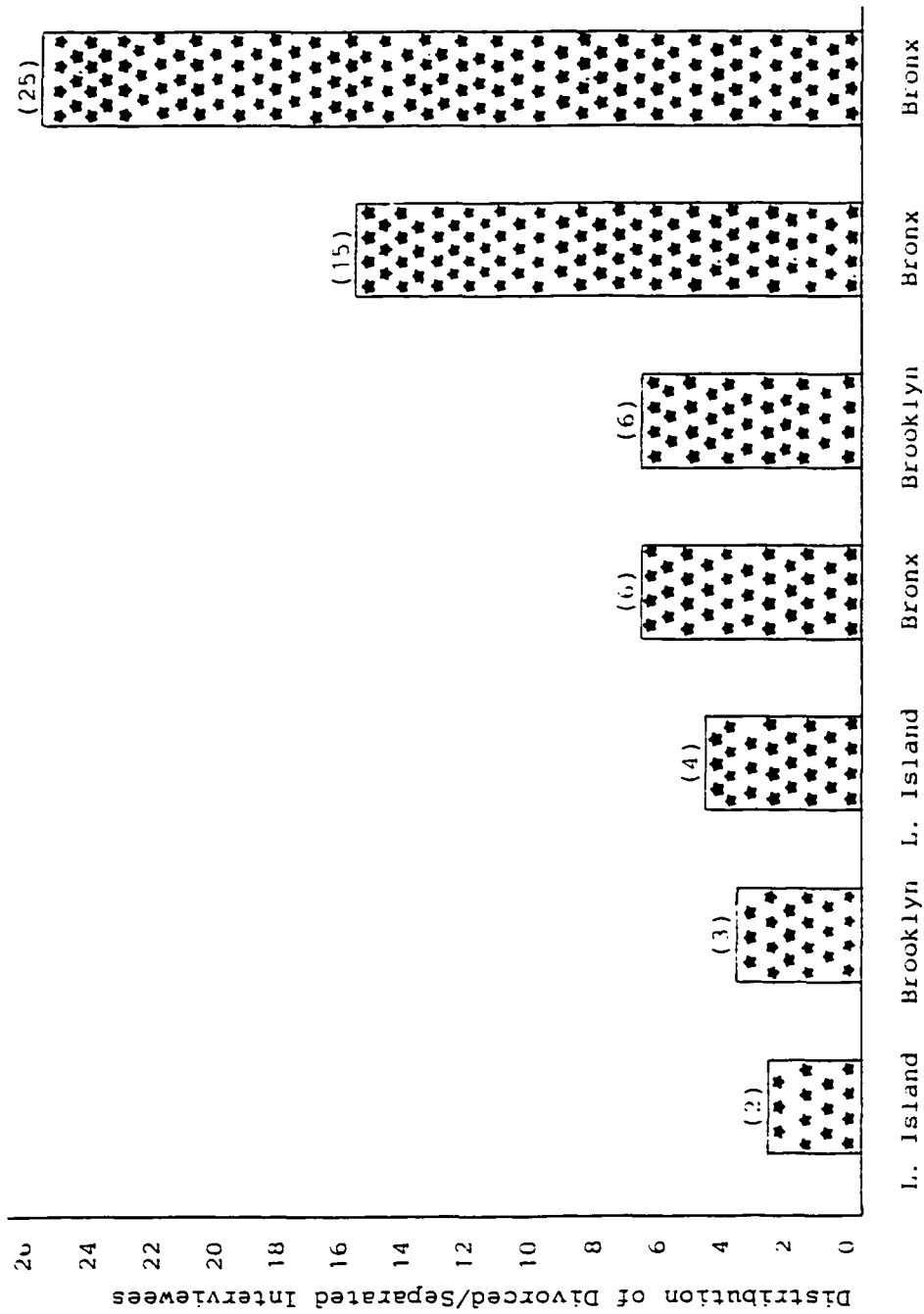


Figure 5. Demographic Distribution of Churches

## APPENDIX II

### Sermon I

1. Topic: The Wrong Question
2. Text: Luke 10:29-36
3. Propositional Statement:

In this parable we should see a conflict between the lawyer's concept of what it means to be a neighbor and Jesus' concept of what it means for him to be a neighbor.

4. Outline:

#### INTRODUCTION:

As Christians we are not to concern ourselves, as the lawyer apparently was doing, with what a person must do to qualify as an object of our love. Instead we are to concern ourselves only with loving. In his very question, the lawyer revealed his basic misunderstanding of the great Commandment. Whereas he was concerned with "who" qualified as a "recipient of his love," Jesus' interpretation of the great commandment was for him to be concerned with qualifying as a lover.

That is why I say the Pharisees asked "The Wrong Question."

#### I. BACKGROUND TO THE PARABLE

Various terms used in the parable evoke attitudes and responses in the reader today which are quite different from those evoked in the hearers of Jesus' day.

### A. The Term Samaritan

An excellent example is the very term "Samaritan." To the twentieth century mind the term "Samaritan" means someone who is "kind," "loving," "merciful," a Christlike man of compassion, "a good man who cares for others."

Because of these preconceived concepts, it is difficult for us today to sense the meaning of the parable in its original setting. The term "Samaritan" was understood in a totally different way in Jesus' day. Today we say "Good Samaritan"!! To a Jew in Jesus' day there was nothing good about a Samaritan. The question that comes into focus is why? Why was this so?

### B. Longstanding Conflict

1. The Jews despised the Samaritans and cursed them (John 8:48). The Samaritans were called devils.

2. The Jews in general sought to avoid all contact with Samaritans. Robert Stein in his book An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus, provides us with some interesting statistics:<sup>1</sup>

a. After the death of Solomon in 922 B.C., the ten northern tribes led by Jeroboam revolted against God's anointed king, the son of Solomon, Rehoboam. These nations of "rebels" which destroyed the unity of God's people were known at various times as Israel, Ephraim, and Samaria.

b. In 722 B.C. Samaria fell and went into exile. The members who were left behind gradually intermarried with the various

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<sup>1</sup>Robert H. Stein, An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), p. 76.



foreigners (Gentiles) scattered in their land by the Assyrians. As a result the Jews looked down upon them as "half-breeds."

c. After their return from exile in Babylon, the Jews, under the leadership of Haggai and Zechariah, began to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem. The Samaritans offered to help them in the rebuilding of the temple, but the Jews spurned the offer, hence the Samaritans sought to hinder the reconstruction of the temple (Ezra 4 to 6).

d. Sometime between A.D. 6 and 9, at midnight during the Passover, certain Samaritans scattered the bones of dead men throughout the court of the Temple in Jerusalem and thus defiled it.

The result of all this was that Jewish-Samaritan relations were filled with much tension and great animosity. It is very important, therefore, for us to understand the background of the Parable, because it is only as we understand the background can we understand the lesson Jesus wanted to teach.

### C. An Indictment

The parable is not a pleasant tale about the traveler who did some good deeds; IT IS A STIRRING INDICTMENT against "SOCIAL," "RACIAL," and RELIGIOUS superiority. In short, it is an indictment against sin.

## II. THE WRONG QUESTION, v. 29

### A. Who is My Neighbor?

I am suggesting that the very nature of this question has in it an element of "transference." Whenever this question is being

asked, the burden of responsibility is immediately transferred to the next person.

It is his responsibility:

1. To make himself available,
2. To make himself known,
3. To make himself the recipient of my love, and
4. To be in the right place at the right time.

NB And that is why I say it is the wrong question.

Instead the question should be:

#### B. Who is a Neighbor?

Luke, chapter 6:27 & 28 and 35 & 36 provides six requirements of the Christian that sum up the answer to this second question:

1. Love your enemies,
2. Do good to them which hate you,
3. Bless them that curse you,
4. Pray for them which despitefully use you,
5. Lend, hoping for nothing, and
6. Be as merciful as your Father.

I am suggesting that after we have read Luke's requirements for being good neighbors, we then ask the follow-up question, "Am I a Neighbor?"

#### C. The Reverse Question

Let me ask you to visualize the scene for a brief moment. See the dying man lying there bleeding; the Priest came up and saw him. He asked, "If I stop to help this dying man, what will happen to me?" And for fear of the possibilities he passed by on the other side. Then along came the Samaritan; he saw the dying man; he sensed the

question those travelers in front of him asked and decided that that was the wrong question. So he decided to reverse the question. He asked, "If I do not stop to help this dying man, what will happen to him?"

That is the question that confronts the Church today.

1. If I do not stop to help those in need, what will happen to them?

2. If I do not stop to help the divorced and the separated, what will happen to them?

3. If I do not stop to help the drug addicts, what will happen to them?

4. If I do not stop to help the frustrated and the lonely, what will happen to them?

5. If I do not stop to help the homeless, what will happen to them?

We may greet one another with a holy kiss, a handshake, a smile, a friendly hello!, but is that all?; is that all we can do? Have we reached out to those who have fallen, have we visited those who have left us, have we shown that we genuinely care?

Love in the Christian church is not dependent upon the object of love, being able to qualify and meet certain requirements. The issue is not, who is to be loved?, that is, "Who is my neighbor?" but rather, "What does it mean for me to love?" That is to say, What does it mean for me to be a neighbor? This is the point of the parable, this is Jesus' teaching that our concern is to be a "Loving Neighbor."

### III. WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO US TODAY THROUGH THE PARABLE?

#### A. Love must be Unconditional

It is clear that the parable of the good Samaritan teaches us to be the personification of love, and that this love is to be unconditional and unqualified.

#### B. Prejudice in All its Forms must be Rejected

The parable rejects all prejudice and discrimination, be it social, intellectual, financial, religious, or cultural.

#### C. We Cannot Choose our Neighbor

We must remember that we cannot choose whom we shall have as our neighbor. (Who is my neighbor will always be the wrong question.) Instead, we must seek actively to be a neighbor and to love all.

### CONCLUSION:

Until the parable speaks to us on this level, we shall never really know what it is teaching. We may know a great deal about the parable, by being able to narrate the story. But we shall never really know what the parable "means," that is, its significance, until we discover what God is saying to us today through the parable.

## Sermon 2

1. Sermon Title: Royalty in Rags
2. Text: Luke 15:11-32.
3. Proposition:

In this sermon we shall see Jesus giving the Pharisees one of the most moving pictures of the depth and magnitude of God's love for one disease-ridden sinful person.

4. Outline:

INTRODUCTION:

This parable was addressed to the scribes and Pharisees; they were always troubled by Jesus' contact with sinners. In relating this parable Jesus painted the bleakest possible picture of their understanding of a sinner.

I. GOSPEL CONTENT: THE SONA. The Request of the Son, v. 12

This story was about a Jewish boy who requested the portion of inheritance that was coming to him from his father. He then insulted his father by leaving home.

B. The Fate of the Son, vs. 13-16.

He squandered all his money on immoral living. And as if to say that was not bad enough, he got a job feeding swine (what was a nice Jewish Orthodox boy doing around swine?).

In relating the story, Jesus went one step farther. This boy, he said, who had been raised in a kosher kitchen, got so hungry that he went to eat pigs' food! (A very fine description of royalty in

ragged). Just see if you can imagine this orthodox crowd's response to this miserable story.

C. The Decision of the Son, vs. 17 & 18

Jesus concluded this part of the story by saying that the boy became so hungry that he decided to go back home to his father. He said, "I will arise and go to my father and will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.'" (v. 18).

II. GOSPEL CONTENT: THE FATHER

A. Brokenness and Loss

It is evident from the outcome of the story that the father experienced brokenness and loss occasioned by the waywardness of the younger son. This is symbolic of the experience of our Heavenly Father when we go astray from the pathway of righteousness. It should also be symbolic of the experience of the Church when members (for whatever reason) go astray from the household of faith.

B. Waiting and Watching

The Bible does not state the period of time for which the younger son was away, which would seem to suggest that time is not the important factor in this story. It is not a question of how long we have been gone from the love of our Father, but, are we willing to come back to Him now? It is not a question as to how long one has left the church, but, are we seeking to bring them back?

C. Action Speaks Louder than Words, v. 20.

In this parable, Jesus gave the Pharisees one of the most moving pictures of God in the New Testament. He told them that even

while the son was a long way off, the father saw him, broke into a trot, and with loving outstretched arms, embraced him and kissed him and proceeded to dress him like a king.

It is of great importance to notice the actions of the Father; he did not care about getting his robe dirty; he did not care about the smell of the boy. His son had come home!! That was all that mattered. He fell on his neck and kissed him. He recognized his royalty even though he was clothed in rags.

D. Celebration and Rejoicing, vs. 23-25.

I submit that the robe, the ring, the shoe, and the feast are all indications of forgiveness and acceptance, and that they represent Christ's robe of righteousness. This is what he offers us when we return home, and the Church can do no less than provide forgiveness and acceptance for those returning sinners. The situation demands celebration and rejoicing.

III. Point of the Story

A. Standing next to the Father, We Look Like that Prodigal Boy—In Rags.

We look diseased because of sin (we are royalty in rags). We are like that kosher boy feeding pigs and eating pigs' food.

B. The Holy Spirit can Convict us of Sin so that we Return to the Father.

Among the points that this parable conveys, is the power of the Holy Spirit. Verse 17 says that when the boy "came to himself." I am stating that it is the power of the Holy Spirit that brought this boy to his self-awareness and it is this same power that will help you

and me come to ourselves. It is this power that will convict those who have drifted from the Father "come to themselves" and return. And when they return, we must accept them, forgive them, love them, and befriend them.

C. When we go to the Father, Our Rags are Removed and We are Left With His Robe of Righteousness

When Jesus changes us, our rags are removed and we are left with His royalty. However, we must remember that before this transformation can take place, we must respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and "arise and go." It calls for immediate action. Yes, our rags can be removed—Jesus Christ has promised to do this for us—but we must go to Him. How beautiful is the experience to have our rags removed and to be left with our "Royalty" only.

IV. LESSONS FROM THE STORY

A. The Love of the Father

Jesus revealed to the Pharisees the nature of God and the tremendous value He places on human life. He also made a perfect and powerful statement about the depth and magnitude of God's love for one disease-ridden sinful person.

Jesus reached out to others in love and asks us to do likewise because we are called to mirror the nature of God. This story therefore is a call to love as God loves. This means then that we must love the unlovely, we must love the outcast, we must love the divorced and separated, we must love the stranger and we must love our enemies. It is the radical demand of discipleship.



### B. The Criticism of the Son, vs. 25-30

According to the law of Deut 21:17, the younger son would receive one-third of his father's inheritance and the elder or first-born, two-thirds. So the question can be asked, Why was he making all this fuss? His share was already set aside and would not be touched. Yet we find him coming down hard on his father and his brother.

He did three things:

1. He set himself up as the self-righteous one.
2. He attacked the mistakes of his brother.
3. He condemned the generosity of the father.

He had within him the spirit of criticism. Sad to say, but how true, that there are so many in the Church today who possess this same spirit of criticism. Only the books of heaven will reveal how many have walked away from the church, religion, and their Lord because of being criticized by their church members.

### C. Royalties in Rags

You and I were that prodigal boy.

You and I have drifted from home.

You and I were once "Royalties in Rags."

But Jesus came and removed our rags and clothed us once more in His royalty. Praise God! Praise God! We are royalties of the King.

### CONCLUSION:

Because of what Christ has done for us, we must seek to find those "royalties" out there in their "rags" and bring them back to the Father's love. If today you feel like you have clothed yourself in the rags of sin, there is hope, for the love of the Father is

constant. He wants to remove your rags and clothe you with his robe of righteousness. Why not accept His love today?

## Sermon 3

1. Sermon Title: Such Great Debt
2. Text: Matt 18:23-30.
3. Proposition:

In this parable Jesus is teaching that you cannot begin to forgive until you first understand God and the magnitude of His forgiveness toward you.

4. Outline:

INTRODUCTION:

As we read or listen to this story, some might be tempted to condemn this servant who, even though he had been forgiven, refused to forgive his fellow brother. It might not be wrong necessarily to do so, for indeed such behavior justifies condemnation. But I wonder, as I contemplate this parable, if I, like that wicked servant, do not treat my brother similarly.

Paralyzed by my own distorted thinking of my spiritual condition, I find myself, like this servant, asking for forgiveness and refusing to give it. Why do I behave this way? What makes me so selfish? Why do I want to be forgiven and not to forgive? Why do I expect from others what I do not give?

Paul in writing his letter to the Roman church admits this kind of confusion in his life; he says, "I do not understand my own actions, for I do not what I want to do, but I do the very thing I hate" (Rom 7:15). He later admits, it is no longer I, but "sin" living in me. That is it. "Sin," a malignant disease, is the possession of a sinful heart that makes me want from others that which

I do not give. And the lesson Jesus would have me learn from this story is, "I cannot forgive others until sin no longer reigns in my heart."

## I. MAN'S DEBT TO GOD

### A. An Insight into the Coming Judgment

Verses 24 and 25 give us an insight as to what the judgment will be like: When we shall stand before the judgment to give an account to God—an account of our time, talent, and means.

### B. Man Seeking Forgiveness from God, v. 26

Notice the action of the man before the king, (1) he fell down and worshipped him, (2) he begged for time saying, "Lord have patience with me," and (3) he promised to repay, "I will pay thee all." The king is the parable represents the heavenly King and the servant all of us, and it illustrates our need for forgiveness.

### C. God's Forgiveness, v. 27

There are three significant actions of the king in verse 27; (1) he was moved with compassion, (2) he loosed his servant, and (3) he forgave him of his debts.

It must be pointed out that these actions are consistent with the practices of Jesus, our heavenly King; (1) Matt 14:14 says he was moved with compassion on the multitude and He healed their sick, (2) Luke 13:12 says He said to the infirm woman, "thou art loosed from thine iniquity," and (3) Luke 7:47 records what He said to Mary Magdalene, "thy sins are forgiven." How encouraging it is to know that God's forgiveness is always complete.

## II. MAN'S DEBT TO MAN, v. 28

### A. Man's Inhumanity to Man

This parable keeps unfurling; the same servant who recently begged for forgiveness (and was forgiven) now meets one of his fellow servants. Notice what he did: (1) he laid his hands on him, (2) took him by the throat, and (3) demanded payment in full.

### B. Man Seeking Forgiveness from Man, v. 29

The reaction of this second servant was similar to that of the first; the difference was, the forgiveness he sought was from his fellow man. He, like the first servant, (1) fell down at his feet, (2) begged for time, and (3) promised to repay.

### C. Man's Reaction, v. 30

Verse 30 tells us that this first servant would not forgive his fellow servant, but went and cast him into prison until he should pay the debt. I am wondering if this first servant is a true reflection of ourselves. Do we find ourselves, like this first servant, unwilling to forgive even though we have been forgiven?

## III. CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE TELLING OF THE PARABLE

### A. Peter's Question, v. 21

In an earlier conversation Peter asked Jesus how often should he forgive his brother. No doubt, in Peter's mind, to forgive any one person seven times was more than sufficient. And I must admit that even for me, like Peter, seven times seems sufficient. To those however, who are not willing to forgive at all, Peter's suggestion must seem like an exaggeration.

### B. Jesus' Answer, v. 22

For Jesus, forgiveness is not numerical; however, to satisfy Peter's mathematical thinking, He said unto him, "Until seventy-times seven." The parable that follows is an expansion of verse 22. In this parable Jesus is saying, you cannot begin to forgive until you understand God and the magnitude of His forgiveness toward you. You must have this understanding before you can forgive. If not, you cannot understand what it means to forgive your brother.

### C. Statistical Expansion on the Parable

Verse 24 tells us that the wicked servant owed the king 10,000 talents. W. E. Vine in his book, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, says that one talent equals 240 pounds.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, 10,000 talents would equal 2,400,000 pounds. At the current exchange rate, one pound equals \$US 1.59. So 2,400,000 pounds at \$US 1.59 would equal \$US 3,816,000. This means that the wicked servant owed his master (the king) \$US 3,816,000. His promise was "I will repay thee all." Was this possible? Yet, he was forgiven.

The humble servant owed 100 pence. One hundred pence equals eight shillings and four pence. At the same exchange rate of \$US 1.59, 100 pence equals 64 US cents. Sixty-four cents!! His request: "I will repay thee all." Was this possible? Yet he would not forgive.

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<sup>1</sup>W. E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Four Volumes in One (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub., 1952), vol. 4, p. 108.

#### IV. POINT OF THE PARABLE

##### A. Our Sins Before God

Our sins before God were like a \$3.8 million debt; being servants, this was totally impossible for us to repay (servants do not earn that kind of money). Yet he forgave us of all our debts.

##### B. Our Brother's Debt

Our brother's debt is just like a sixty-four cent debt when compared to our past sins before God. How easy it is to forget our debts and focus on our brother's debt, and this parable would have us understand that we need to forgive as we seek forgiveness ourselves.

Our brother's debt must not be seen numerically, for forgiveness is not numerical, but rather as a principle: we are forgiven as we forgive.

##### C. Are We Willing to Forgive?

That is the question that confronts each of us today: Are we willing to forgive our brother? I submit that the Church must occupy itself with this question; it must seek at all times to forgive, regardless of the debt as long as repentance is sought.

#### CONCLUSION:

This parable is speaking to us today at the level of our human experience and understanding. It is saying, as disciples of Christ we cannot ask Peter's question, "How often shall I forgive my brother?" Forgiveness is not numerical, it is not measurable; instead, forgiveness is a way of life.

## APPENDIX III

### PRIMARY OBJECTIVES OF THE CHURCH<sup>1</sup>

In order to maintain a proper perspective, a local church must distinguish between primary and secondary objectives. Primary objectives are statements by your church of the manner in which it should pursue its organismic and community purposes. Secondary objectives are statements of the kinds of supporting functions and resources that it must have in order to fulfill its primary objectives, viz., physical resources, financial resources, organization and personnel, and public responsibility. No matter how important these secondary objectives may appear to be, they must not take our attention away from the primary ones. We may have the best possible church staff, superb facilities, and a huge budget, but if then are used for the wrong purposes or if they become ends in themselves, they are meaningless and ours is a most pathetic situation.

Although we cannot prescribe the primary objectives for your local church, perhaps it will be helpful to suggest the following as some areas in which objectives are needed:

1. Spiritual growth of Christians. What are your objectives as a church to help one another to grow toward spiritual maturity?
2. Recognition, development, and use of spiritual gifts. What are the objectives of your church that are directed toward the spiritual gifts of all of your members?
3. Unification of the body in fellowship and service. What are your church's objectives in bringing unity among the many parts of the body of Christ?
4. Growth of Christian love. What are your objectives for building love and mutual concern among members for the well-being of one another?
5. Mutual sharing and involvement in one another's lives. What are your objectives for the interaction and involvement of your church community into one another's lives?
6. Maintenance of Christian values. What are your objectives to assure that Christian values are maintained by your members?
7. Spreading of the Gospel. What are your objectives for encouragement, training, sending, and supporting members who witness locally or abroad?

These are the bases for our existence as a church; we should direct our efforts, our resources, and our time totally to these primary objectives.

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<sup>1</sup>Adapted from Kenneth K. Kilinski, and Jerry Woffard. Organization and Leadership of the Local Church, 1975.



How Life Changes Affect Your Health<sup>1</sup>

## SOCIAL READJUSTMENT RATING SCALE

RANK	LIFE EVENT	LIFE CRISIS UNITS
1	Death of spouse	100
2	Divorce	73
3	Marital separation	65
4	Jail term	63
5	Death of close family member	63
6	Personal injury or illness	53
7	Marriage	50
8	Fired at work	47
9	Marital reconciliation	45
10	Retirement	45
11	Change in health of family member	44
12	Pregnancy	40
13	Sex difficulties	39
14	Gain of new family member	39
15	Business readjustment	39
16	Change in financial state	38
17	Death of close friend	37
18	Change to different line of work	36
19	Change in number of arguments with spouse	35
20	Mortgage over \$10,000	31
21	Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30
22	Change in responsibilities at work	29
23	Son or daughter leaving home	29
24	Trouble with in-laws	29
25	Outstanding personal achievement	28
26	Wife begins or stops work	26
27	Begin or end school	26
28	Change in living conditions	25
29	Revision of personal habits	24
30	Trouble with boss	23
31	Change in work hours or conditions	20
32	Change in residence	20
33	Change in school	20
34	Change in recreation	19
35	Change in church activities	19
36	Change in social activities	18
37	Mortgage or loan less than \$10,000	17
38	Change in sleeping habits	16
39	Change in number of family get-togethers	15
40	Change in eating habits	15
41	Vacation	13
42	Christmas	12
43	Minor violations of the law	11

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from "Social Readjustment Rating Scale" by T. H. Holmes and R. H. Rahe. Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 5 (1967): 72.

HOW TO USE: Add up value of Life Crisis Units for Life Events experienced in two-year period.

0 to 150—No significant problems

150-199—Mild life crisis (33 percent chance of illness)

200 to 299—Moderate life crisis (50 percent chance of illness)

300 or over—Major life crisis (80 percent chance of illness)

#### EXAMPLES

LIFE EVENT	LIFE CRISIS UNITS
1. Death of spouse	100
Son or daughter leaving home	29
Gain of a new family member	39
Trouble with in-laws (the new son-in-law abhors you, too)	29
Change in financial state (less money)	38
Change in residence	20
Change in social activities	18
Change in recreation (now alone)	19
Change to a different line of work (office, not house)	36
Change in living conditions (poorer)	25
	<hr/> TOTAL 353
2. Change in health of family member (improved)	44
Change in financial state	38
Retirement	45
Mortgage over \$10,000 (assumed)	31
Change in residence	20
Gain of new family member	39
Son or daughter leaving home	29
Christmas	12
Change in social activities (more)	18
Change in recreation (now husband can accompany you)	19
Change in living conditions (richer)	25
	<hr/> TOTAL 320

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